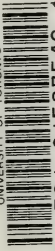


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EXPOSITORY LECTURES

ON THE

COLOSSIANS.



Bibl. Lit. Comment. (N.Y.)
C.W.
EXPOSITORY LECTURES

ON

St. Paul's Epistle to the Colossians.

BEING AN

ATTEMPT TO APPLY THE APOSTLE'S ARGUMENT

RESPECTING THE ERRORS ON THE SUBJECT OF

THE MEDIATION OF CHRIST AT COLOSSE,

TO THE

Present Circumstances of the Church.

Wilson
BY

DANIEL BISHOP OF CALCUTTA,
AND METROPOLITAN OF INDIA.

NEW-YORK:

PROTESTANT EPISCOPAL SOCIETY FOR THE PROMOTION OF
EVANGELICAL KNOWLEDGE,

11 BIBLE HOUSE, ASTOR PLACE.

1859.

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TO THE
RIGHT REVEREND
THE LORD BISHOPS OF MADRAS AND BOMBAY.

Delhi, January 11th, 1845.

MY HONOURED BRETHREN IN CHRIST,

Permit me to offer for your acceptance, and through you, to the Venerable Archdeacons and Clergy of India with their flocks, the accompanying Lectures on the Epistle of St. Paul to the Colossians.

They were first composed about thirty years since for the Parochial Chapel in London, of which I was then minister. This was in 1815.

In 1842, I re-arranged the course, and reduced it to a compressed form for the seven Fridays of Lent, at the Cathedral, Calcutta.

I have since been delivering particular lectures from time to time at the Straits of Malacca, Madras, Ceylon, and Bombay, during my present Metropolitan and Diocesan Visitation of 1842-5, and which is not yet terminated.

On my arrival at the Hills of Simla last June, it occurred to me that perhaps I could not better employ a part of the four months of retreat from the heats of the Plains, than in re-writing for the press the entire series. I accordingly enlarged it to nineteen discourses, and divided these again into thirty-five, as I transcribed them from my short-hand copy.

Such as they are, I commend them to the divine blessing and to your favourable judgment, my Right Reverend Brethren in the Lord.

You will, perhaps, remember that I prepared, in like manner, a volume of Miscellaneous Sermons for the press at Simla, during the primary Visitation of 1834-6. The opinion I then formed has been confirmed by reflection, that I could scarcely consult better for the spiritual benefit of an enormous and unmanageable diocese than by thus quietly visiting it, as it were, at my leisure in the permanent form of a silent volume, in addition to the very hasty and unsatisfactory personal intercourse, which is all that the extent of the diocese allows me to hold with my brethren once in four years.

As this volume is, considering my time of life, in all human probability the last, perhaps you will further allow me, my Right Reverend Brethren, to express through you the hope that, not only the Reverend Clergy and the Laity of India, will accept it as my final testimony to the Gospel of Christ; but that also, my Reverend Brethren the Clergy and their flocks at home, with whom I have been at different periods connected for forty-four years, will allow the volume to recall to their memory the name of one who has never ceased to love them, and to pray to Almighty God on their behalf.

It will be gratifying to me to think that I am thus, as it were, sending my parting salutations (as the apostles in the closing chapters of their epistles do) to those who were for so many years fellow-helpers with me to the kingdom of God, or who had assisted in my education in youth, or who had been placed under my spiritual care in more advanced life.

I beg, then, to transmit this memorial of my gratitude and affection to all these friends—

TO THE REVEREND PRINCIPAL AND VICE-PRINCIPAL OF ST. EDMUND HALL, OXFORD.*

TO THE CLERGY AND PARISHIONERS OF CHOBHAM AND BISLEY IN THE DIOCESE OF WINCHESTER.†

* Of which society I have been a member since May 1, 1798.

† Where I was curate to that most distinguished minister of Christ, the late Rev. Richard Cecil, from 1801 to 1803.

To the Clergy and Parishioners of UPPER AND NETHER WORTON, near Banbury, in the Diocese of Oxford.*

To the numerous and most affectionate friends who FORMED THE CONGREGATION OF ST. JOHN'S, BEDFORD ROW,† with their present Minister.

And, lastly, to the twenty or twenty-five Reverend Clergy of the PARISH OF ST. MARY, ISLINGTON, with its population of 50 or 60,000 souls, from which, after an incumbency of eight years, I was removed to this awful and overwhelming position, of Bishop of Calcutta, in March 1832.

My object in thus enumerating my chief spheres of duty is that I may *not seem negligent*, so far as concerns myself, *to put* my brethren residing now or labouring therein, *in remembrance*, in this and every other way, of the commanding truths of the Gospel, *though they know them and be established*, as I trust, *in the present and unchangeable truth* of Christ our Lord. *Yea, I think it meet*, far as I am removed from them in person, *as long as I am in this tabernacle, to stir them up by putting them in remembrance*. *Knowing*, most assuredly, from my time of life, within less than three years and a half of the age of man, and from the shock of late given to my already debilitated constitution by a dangerous attack of fever, *that I must shortly put off this my tabernacle, as our Lord Jesus Christ by these warnings hath showed me*. *Moreover, I would thus endeavour*, by these salutations and the volume accompanying them, that my friends *may be the better able, after my decease, to have these things always in remembrance*.

The only return I entreat of all into whose hands this volume may fall, is that they will *labour fervently in prayer for me, that I may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God; and may finish at length my course with joy and the ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the Gospel of the grace of God*.

* Which I served as curate from 1803 to 1812.

† From 1808 to 1824.

It would be most ungrateful in me if I did not here publicly record, before I conclude this address, my humble thanksgivings to Almighty God for having preserved me so long in this fearful climate of India, and having permitted me to enter on the thirteenth year of my residence in this diocese ; especially when I remember that the longest of my two Right Reverend predecessors' continuance was little more than seven years and a half, and the shortest only nine months. I would also here record my thanksgiving to God, that you, my Right Reverend Brethren, have been preserved in your dioceses of Madras and Bombay for nearly seven years. Would to God that not only Ceylon were about to be erected into a separate see, but also Agra with its north-western provinces, extending to the Indus ; and Singapore, with its neighbouring important stations in the Straits of Malacca, and Cochin or Tanjore, with the Christian flocks in the neighbourhood of the Syrian Churches, and the forty thousand converts of the Propagation and Church Missionary Societies.

To Christ our Lord, however, I commend these and all other the vital interests of souls in India. Him I adore as the Head of his Church. Of him I implore the pardon of all my unnumbered sins and short-comings, especially as a Bishop ; to him I look for a blessing on the volume I now with fear and trembling send forth ; and in him confide for raising up instruments for the accomplishment of his designs of mercy to India, and the whole heathen and Mohammedan world.

In this blessed Saviour may we be found, my Right Reverend Brethren, living and dying ; and to Him, with the Father and the Holy Ghost, may we ascribe praises and thanksgivings as the God of our salvation, in time and throughout eternity !

I beg to subscribe myself,

Your most affectionate Brother,

D. CALCUTTA.

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LECTURES .

LECTURE I .

INTRODUCTORY.

GENERAL VIEW OF THE EPISTLE TO THE COLOSSIANS.

OF all the epistles of St. Paul, there is, perhaps, no one more instructive, or more adapted to meet the errors of the times in which we live, than that addressed to the converts at Colosse.

The first chapter of it can scarcely be surpassed in sublimity by any other part of Scripture. Nor are there many portions of Holy Writ more exalted in spirituality and devout affections than the third. Whilst the second is conspicuous for directly censuring those very "traditions" of men, and that "voluntary humility," which have of late years been working amongst us, and which so early led on the Roman church to the margin of that gulf of superstition and idolatry into which it has been plunged from the sixth or seventh century.

The main cause of the temporary prevalence of these tendencies to "will-worship" has been an insensible depart-

ure from the sure foundation of the Gospel as laid in this epistle—the inexhaustible sufficiency of Christ for all the parts of man's salvation—that the penitent believer is, as the apostle expresses it, “complete in him,” whether for the free and gratuitous remission of sins by faith in his blood, or for the sanctification of his nature by the internal grace of the Holy Spirit, in the use of the means which he has himself ordained. Men once letting go their hold of Christ, naturally become the sport of self-invented schemes for attaining pardon and holiness. And when human additions to the Gospel begin to be admitted, a lapse into all the corruptions of the church which falsely claims antiquity and universality, and impiously, infallibility, is inevitable.

It is with the humble design, should God bless the attempt, of guarding the clergy and their flocks in India from any remaining efforts of this “mystery of iniquity,” and of building up the young on their “most holy faith,” that I propose to deliver the following course of practical lectures on this epistle.

The apostle does not here go through the scheme of the Gospel systematically, as in his noble epistle to the Romans. Nor does he enter on detailed censures of irregularities in the public worship of God and the conduct of the Christian converts, as in the first of his epistles to the Corinthians. Nor does he argumentatively refute any open and general defection from the Gospel in the matter of justification, as in his Epistle to the Galatians.

He had not occasion to take any of these courses in the instance of the church at Colosse. His address to it is tender, instructive, and cautionary. He touches, without dwelling, on the errors which had been introduced; and bestows his main strength in delineating the person, glory, and fullness of Christ. All this, however, will be better understood if I make a few remarks on the occasion and scope of the Epistle itself.

Colosse was a city of Phrygia, now called Natolai, in the

lesser Asia, situated at an equal distance between Laodicea and Hierapolis.*

It is uncertain whether the church was planted there by St. Paul himself, or by Epaphras, Timothy, or some other evangelist. It is most probable that Epaphras was honoured as the chief instrument in the work.

The Epistle was written during St. Paul's first imprisonment at Rome, and nearly at the same time with those to Philemon, and the churches of Philippi and Ephesus, about A.D. 64.

It appears that the general body of the Colossians continued steadfast in the apostle's doctrine at the time when he addressed to them this letter; but that Satan, the great spiritual adversary, had succeeded in sowing tares amongst the wheat, though not to the same extent as in the churches of Corinth and Galatia.

Certain persons had privily crept in, probably from amongst the Jewish converts, who began to enforce human traditions, the obligation of the Mosaic law, and airy speculations on the mediation of angels and the necessity of excessive bodily austerities, borrowed from the dreams of Pythagoras and Plato.†

* Eusebius informs us that Colosse, Laodicea, and Hierapolis, were destroyed by an earthquake the year following the date of this epistle, A. D. 65. The site of Colosse is uncertain now; but travellers point to its supposed ruins on the river Lycus, about nine miles from the ancient Laodicea.

† Long before the light of the Gospel, the Greeks had introduced their philosophy into many of the countries of Lesser Asia, and among the rest, into Phrygia, where the tenets of Pythagoras (about 500 B.C.) were disseminated, which taught the doctrine of the transmigration of souls, of crimes committed by men in pre-existent states punished in their present, the unlawfulness of killing animals, and the possibility of men's freeing themselves from vices by excessive abstinence.

The followers of Plato (B.C. 400) held that the government of the world was carried on by beings inferior to God, but superior to men—such as the Jews believed the angels to be. These they called *Δαιμονες*—a kind of divinities; and these they enjoined their sect to worship on account of their agency in human affairs.

Thus the fancies of a vain philosophy as to doctrine, united with a mixture of Jewish and heathen superstition as to practice, were in danger of corrupting the unstable in the flock from the simplicity of Christ. Upon this, as it appears, Epaphras resorted to the apostle Paul, then a prisoner at Rome, to assure him of the fidelity of the great body of the church, and to take his advice as to the remedies to be applied to the partial evils which had arisen. This gave occasion to the apostle to address to them this inimitable Epistle, the scope of which is expressed negatively in the emphatic denunciation, "Not holding the head;" and positively in the assertion, "Christ is all in all;" both of which agree with the words I have already cited, "Ye are complete in Him;"¹ not, indeed, in the sense of superseding means, order, discipline, the ministry of the word, the devout use of the sacraments, prayer, watchfulness, effort, study of the Scriptures, and general obedience; for the apostle insists on all these and the like topics in his other Epistles, and alludes to them in this; but in the sense of seeking any part of our salvation out of Christ, in the sense of leaning on any or all these means, however lawful and necessary in their place; of bringing in additions to the methods of acquiring pardon or holiness as down in the Gospel, of turning aside to Judaism and heathen philosophy to supply something wanting in Christ, or of inventing any modes of "will-worship" and "voluntary humility" beyond and beside his commandments.

To act thus would be to declare that Christ is *not* "all in all," to pronounce themselves *not* "complete in Him," and to let go their hold, and sever their connexion with Him, as "the Head" of his body the church.

We hear of one of the churches mentioned in this Epistle, Laodicea, once again before the close of the sacred canon, about thirty years from this time amongst the seven Asiatic churches;² and the state of deathlike lukewarmness and torpor, together with conceit of their own attainments into which

1) Col. ii. 19; ii. 10; iii. 11.

2) Rev. iii. 14, 17.

they were then sunk, may illustrate the danger of the admission of any admixtures, however plausible, or however apparently trifling, with the unadulterated doctrine of Christ Jesus.

And we further learn that though the worship of angels was repressed for a time by this Epistle, yet it afterwards prevailed to such a degree that the council of Laodicea in the fourth century were compelled to condemn it by an express canon*—such is the tenacity of error when once received into the corrupt heart of man, and so wide its diffusion even among distant generations.

The great importance of this Epistle to the Colossians in the circumstances of danger in which they were placed, may be gathered from these facts. It may be collected, also, from the command expressly given them to read it publicly in their assemblies, and to exchange it, for the same purpose, with the letter coming to them from Laodicea,† probably our apostle's Epistle to the Ephesians—an injunction binding upon Christians in every age of the church, and especially in a time like the present, when the same errors have been rife amongst us.

The study, indeed, of the various appropriate portions of the inspired Scripture is the grand means, in the hands of the Holy Spirit, of stopping at once different heresies and novelties as they arise; and the sooner it is applied, and the more boldly, the better. Even when an evil seems past, it is still important to dwell on such portions, in order to extinguish the lurking mischiefs, and prevent their revival.

* The Council of Laodicea, (A. D. 365,) in the 35th canon, declare "Christians ought not to leave the church of God, and go and name angels or gather assemblies. If, therefore, any one is found to practise this idolatry, let him be anathema, because he hath left our Lord Jesus Christ, and has turned to idolatry." This is confirmed by Theodoret, (A. D. 420,) who, in his Comment on this Epistle, testifies that this mischief continued long in Phrygia and Pisidia.

† "And when this Epistle is read among you, cause that it be also read in the church of the Laodiceans; and that ye likewise read the Epistle from Laodicea."—Col. iv. 16.

And at present there is such an extraordinary and contemporaneous assault upon the Protestant faith, and especially in our own church, which has for three centuries been the bulwark of it, on the part of popery, open or concealed, and in every quarter of the world, that a tenfold vigilance is required.

Indeed, the constant study of St. Paul's divine Epistles, and those of the other apostles, is at all times indispensable to a right understanding of the Gospel, and to an effectual exclusion of the most fundamental errors.

The neglect of the supreme and uncontrolled authority of this part of Holy Scripture, as the last and most complete explication of the Christian faith, has been the pregnant cause of a whole congeries of false doctrines in the various ages of the church.

The Epistles, as the final development of the divine scheme of salvation, are essential to the interpretation of all the preceding parts of Scripture.

Our Lord expressly promised the Holy Spirit to his disciples to "lead them into all truth;" and declared that "the Spirit," the great Teacher, "would not be given" till He himself "was glorified;" but that He would then be poured out, would "bring all things to their remembrance," and remove all the comparative obscurity of the previous parts of divine Revelation.

These sacred Epistles, therefore, respect the last discoveries made to man of the Deity and Atonement of Christ, and the completeness of his salvation, that is, the full and unclouded doctrine of the incarnation of the Eternal Word; and of the righteousness of justification in his obedience and sufferings, reckoned to our account and received by faith only, and of the distinct but inseparable righteousness of sanctification infused into the heart, in the use of the appointed means, by the grace of his Holy Spirit. And, therefore, without a thorough understanding of this last portion of Holy Writ, the key is wanting to the whole plan of redemp-

tion, and any errors, even the most fatal, may be gradually palmed upon the church.*

Nor can we be guarded against superstition and tyranny as respects ecclesiastical government, except by the study of the same divine Epistles, in which the gentle and mild administration of order and discipline is sketched out; in which church polity, perpetual ministry, the threefold order of pastors, the administration of the sacraments, authoritative checks to false doctrines, exclusion of heretics and profane livers from the Lord's table, are placed on their true footing.

The high and glorious mysteries, indeed, which the Epistles develope, are not to be exclusively taught, for every part of Scripture is to have its proportionate place in our instructions; but the Epistles must be thoroughly understood and laid as the groundwork into which all other matters of revelation are to be wrought.

It has been said that the Epistles, and especially St. Paul's, are difficult and obscure. No mistake can be greater. Without divine illumination, indeed, sought for by earnest prayer, and depended upon in the use of the proper means of arriving at a sound interpretation, no part of Scripture can be understood, except the purely historical, and that not adequately; but with this indispensable assistance, nothing is obscure as to the broad, saving truth of Christ. The Gospel shines forth like the light of day. The main course of the apostle's arguments is perspicuous. It is only to a careless or presumptuous reader that it is difficult; or to a student, whose mind, however learned and diligent, is pre-occupied with a scheme of divinity contrary to that of St. Paul, and who labours to make him speak just the opposite to what his words import. The hinderances are then for the

* For example, How is Gen. xv. to be understood without Rom. iv. ? or Psalm xxxii., without the same? or the entire system of Mosaical types, without the Epistle to the Hebrews? And so of the prophecies of Christ.

time insuperable ; but not from any obscurity in the sacred writings, but from the want of the right state of mind on the part of those who would interpret them.

The apostle divides his Epistle to the Colossians into four parts, which nearly coincide with the four chapters as we find them.

In the first, he establishes the truth of the Gospel in a manner adapted to the impending dangers.

He next refutes, in a brief, but most decisive condemnation, the errors which had arisen among them.

He proceeds then to point out the true motives to holiness as springing from the Gospel he had taught, and from no other source.

Lastly, he urges on them several duties, both general and particular, in his usual manner ; concluding with salutations.

A strong resemblance to the Epistle to the Ephesians is observable throughout. There is the same effusion of heart, the same tenderness of affection, and the same elevation of views as to the glorious salvation of Christ. Several, also, of the particular topics and turns of expression have a great similarity, which enables us to illustrate the one by the other, and which gives the impression that the two were poured out from the writer's mind whilst all the matters of both were fresh in his recollection. And if the words, "the Epistle from Laodicea," allude, as is probable, to that to the Ephesians, which was to be transmitted onwards to them from Laodicea in order to be publicly read, then we may consider the letter before us as a continuation of that to the converts at Ephesus. And it is noted by the most ancient commentators, Chrysostom amongst the number, that this and the other Epistles written by St. Paul during his imprisonment, abound with the tenderest and most pathetic addresses, the highest spirituality of affection, and great similarity of topics, owing to the large measure, as it is

justly supposed, of the Holy Spirit's consolation, with which he was then favoured.

The introduction, or exordium, of the Epistle, occupies the first eleven verses. It contains, besides the salutation, a thanksgiving to God for the Colossians, a testimony to the doctrine of Epaphras amongst them, and a most solemn prayer for their progress in every part of the Christian character.

LECTURE II.

SALUTATION, AND THANKSGIVING FOR THE FAITH AND LOVE OF
THE COLOSSIAN CHRISTIANS.

Col. i. 1—4.

OUR present lecture will contain remarks on the first four verses of St. Paul's Introduction, comprehending his salutation and part of his thanksgivings to Almighty God on account of the Colossians.

1. *Paul an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and Timothy our brother.*

In some of his epistles, St. Paul only styles himself "the servant of Jesus Christ;" but here, as being probably unknown by face to the Colossians, he mentions expressly that he was *an apostle of Jesus Christ*, and declares he was so by *the will of God*. This is in order to show that he was not acting on his own will, as the false apostles, nor intruding, as they were, into a province not assigned him; but that he was discharging the functions of an apostle committed to him by the will and authority of Almighty God, in writing to admonish and caution them.

It is this *will of God* which is in every age the founda-

tion of authority in the Christian ministry. We cannot, indeed, ascertain this as the apostles did, by revelation, but we may and must by the inward movement of the Holy Ghost upon the mind, and by the voice and calling of those who are duly appointed to examine the claims of candidates for sacred functions, and to send them forth by solemn ordination as labourers in the Lord's harvest *

The apostle joins Timothy with himself, and calls him his brother. In like manner, when writing to the Corinthians, he joins Sosthenes, and to the Thessalonians, Sylvanus.

Timothy is probably named here as having been his amanuensis in writing the letter, and possibly as having founded the church at Colosse, or at least as well known there. And St. Paul styles him, not his son, as in the Epistles to Timothy, but his brother, in order, perhaps, to give him the more authority if he should be again sent to labour amongst them.

The union of other and younger ministers with himself in his public authoritative Epistles, is a proof of his charity and esteem for them, and of the honour he wished to put on his younger brethren; and constitutes, in fact, a strong testimony to their fidelity. Genuine lowliness of mind, likewise in the apostle, led him to claim nothing beyond his necessary authority, but to share, so far as was possible, every thing of an honourable nature with his beloved fellow-labourers.

Nothing, we may be assured, can be more offensive to Christ, and contrary to the whole spirit of the Gospel, nothing more opposite to the conduct of the inspired apostles, and more destructive of all real usefulness in the ministry,

* In our own Church, it is by the bishops and chief pastors that this authority is exercised, assisted, according to the canons and rubrics, by their presbyters in the examination and imposition of hands.

As to the inward call, it is thus laid at the foundation of our service: "Do you trust that you are inwardly moved by the Holy Ghost to take upon you this office and ministration, to serve God for the promoting of his glory and the edifying of his people?" To which awful question the candidate must be prepared to answer, "I trust so."

than the arrogance and exclusive claims so much put forward of late years amongst us. The apostles and the reformers knew nothing of an apostolical succession in the modern sense of not merely an official, but a personal descent from the apostles—a visible and tangible series of men, with a canonical derivation of sacramental grace, succeeding, in all following ages, to the authority of the first apostles, whether preaching their doctrines and treading in their holy steps or not—and this succession, incapable as it is of proof, held to be essential to the lawfulness of the ministry, and to the validity of the sacraments.

A divine power, indeed, the apostles always asserted, and in a manner suited to their direct inspiration and possession of miraculous gifts. And in like manner an authority is necessarily deposited, in its due measure, with the bishops and presbyters of every age; but an authority mild, gracious, directly subservient to the salvation of souls, and in the spirit of such passages as the following—“Not that we have dominion over your faith, but are helping of your joy; for by faith ye stand.” “We preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord, and ourselves your servants, for Jesus’ sake.”*

2. *To the saints and faithful brethren in Christ which are at Colosse, grace be unto you, and peace from God our Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ.*

The general character of Christians is, that they are *saints and faithful brethren in Christ*, holy persons, sanctified by God the Father through his word and Spirit, set apart for himself as his peculiar treasure and property, publicly sealed as his by the grace of holy baptism, and living according to God’s commandments; separated from the vanities and pollutions of the world.

The word saint is now a term of reproach; but let it be remembered that none but saints will enter a holy heaven,

* See note at the end of the lecture.

or see a holy God, or be declared interested in the holy salvation of Christ. When Scripture terms are ridiculed, the things intended by them are soon renounced also.

They are called *brethren in Christ*, being children of the same family, members of the same body, and born of the same Holy Spirit.

Thus they are all of them mystically *in Christ*; inserted into Him; interested in all his benefits; united to Him as the branches to the vine; protected and saved in Him, as Noah in the ark, and the manslayer in the city of his refuge.

The duty to which these are called, and of which the apostle reminds them, is fidelity—the *faithful brethren*—thus tacitly distinguishing between the faithful and steadfast Christians at Colosse, and the doubtful, wavering and unfaithful, of whom Epaphras had brought him word, and whom the arts of the seducers had too much shaken.

Let us examine ourselves whether we be really thus in Christ by faith, and whether we are indeed saints and faithful brethren in that holy fellowship.

A time of trial seems coming on—we know not what temptations and persecutions may assail us—men's minds are shaking as the reed with a mighty wind. Let us be "faithful unto death, that we receive the crown of life."

The salutation addressed to these Christians is in the form of a prayer, *Grace be to you, and peace from God our Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ.*

Grace is free favour, the undeserved act of the divine will towards man, a guilty sinner. "By grace," saith the apostle, "ye are saved." "Being justified freely by his grace." The word also is sometimes applied to those habitual graces which flow from the first unmerited act of mercy, and which God infuses for the sanctification of the soul. "To every one of us is given grace, according to the measure of the gift of Christ."

Peace follows grace, reconciliation with God through the blood of Christ, the Prince of peace; peace of conscience,

peace in the troubles and trials of life, peace amidst persecutions and temptations, peace in the hour of death.

These blessings are to be implored *from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ*; not from the saints, nor from the Virgin Mary, nor from the church or the priesthood; but from God our Father, who planned the design of salvation, and from the Lord Jesus Christ, who purchased all its blessings.

Observe here one proof, amongst a thousand others, of the proper divinity of Christ; to receive prayer is the peculiar prerogative of the one living and true God; and here prayer is equally addressed to Christ, as to our heavenly Father.

3. *We give thanks to God and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you.*

Gratitude is one of the highest duties of the Christian. Charity interests us in the happiness of others, and this interest mounts up to God in gratitude, adoration, and praise. Whenever we hear of any good occurring to the body or soul of others, especially of those with whom we are connected, we should lift up our voices in thanksgiving to the Author of the blessing.

The apostle adds to the sacred name God the instructive and consoling title, *the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ*; the one a name of awe and majesty, the other of tenderness and grace. As under the Old Testament, “the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob,” was the name by which Jehovah in his covenant of mercy was pleased to make himself known, so, under the New Testament, as *the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ*, by whom the old covenant was abolished and the new established in its place. God is now revealed to us “in Christ,” and “reconciling in Him the world unto Himself.”

Always praying for you. This marks the time and frequency of the Apostle’s thanksgiving, the season of prayer, which is the most solemn one for rendering thanks to God.

The frequency of his devotions is noted by the word *always*, that is, at all returning times, morning and evening, at noon-day, and other seasons, as occasion may require. So that though the apostle was not literally at every moment of the day engaged in solemn prayer, yet he was always in the spirit of prayer, and ready to enter upon it—it was his habit, his delight, his perpetually recurring practice.

Thanks to God for past benefits, is a good beginning for imploring others.

Do *we* pray always? Do our prayers constitute a substantial part and parcel of the duty of each day? Do we fix times, frequent times of prayer? Do we cultivate without ceasing the spirit of prayer? Do we give thanks for the good which is vouchsafed to others? Such questions as these we should often propose to ourselves. Without prayer there is no life in the soul. Without prayer there is no bond of union between a pastor and his flock. Without prayer no blessing can be expected from a God whom we do not even ask to prosper us. And acts of gratitude are an essential branch of devotion. Without it no other part of prayer can be performed aright.

4. Since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus, and of the love which ye have to all the saints.

The cause of our gratitude to God for our neighbours and flocks should not so much be that God hath given them health, riches, success, fame, which may be all delusive dreams, and at best can protect neither from sickness nor death, nor the judgment that follows, but that God hath revealed Christ unto them.

Faith and love comprehend the greater part of practical Christianity. Faith is the commencement, love the completion; faith informs the understanding, love purifies the heart; the one is the light, the other the warmth of the soul; what the one believes as true, the other embraces as good.

Faith is a holy trust in all that God has made known to

us in his word. It is the grace which receives all the truth contained in the Bible. As the natural eye is adapted to receive the light of heaven, so faith is adapted to welcome all the truth of the Scriptures. And as in the first creation light preceded other external blessings, so in the new creation does the light of faith precede other graces.

Faith is the foundation and root of piety, and the gate of life by which God enters the soul.

But the apostle says, *Faith in Christ Jesus*. This is the peculiar, and though not the exclusive, yet the principal and transcendent, and, if justification is regarded, the appropriate and saving object of Christian faith.

The general object of faith, as I have said, is all the truth revealed by God in the holy Scripture. The object of justifying faith is Christ Jesus as Mediator and Saviour; Christ predicted by the prophets—Christ shadowed forth by the ceremonial law—Christ exhibited in the Gospel—Christ expiring on the cross—Christ offered to man universally for the remission of sins and the other great purposes of salvation.

The peculiar and appropriate act of justifying faith, is that by which we apprehend, for ourselves individually, the free promise of pardon and eternal life made through the merits and sufferings of Christ; which justifying faith, being a holy principle, and including the belief of all that God has made known to us in his word, “works by love,” and produces obedience.

And so the apostle adds, *And love to all the saints*. Love is a habit divinely created, by which the will is inclined to love God above all things, and every thing else on account of God.

Love is a fruit of the Spirit, and can never be separated from faith, though it may, and is, from a merely dead historical belief, like that of the devils, “who believe and tremble.”

It is the practice of the modern divines, against whose

errors I wish to guard India, to imitate their predecessors of the Council of Trent, and separate faith from love, asserting that faith is formed by love or charity. This is in order to overthrow the rightcousness of faith in our justification, by making charity a joint instrument of it ; but is in plain contradiction to the Scripture, which teaches us, not that faith is formed by charity, but, on the contrary, that charity is formed and produced by faith, as its proper fruit, and that it is faith alone that justifies.

Love embraces all men generally, but especially in proportion as we discern in them the character of saints. And if the hatred and reproaches of the world fall upon them, it is only attracted the more strongly towards them, as being most in need of our help.

Love is nourished by contemplation, intercourse, acts of mutual aid, affectionate remembrance, defence of our brethren when defamed, admonition when in fault, tenderness in dealing with them when differences of opinion and controversies exist ; attempts to lessen grounds of dissension, and widen those of agreement ; to put the best interpretation on doubtful actions, and to rejoice in the least opening for peace—all crowned with habitual meekness of spirit and deportment.

Love is not the giving up our conscientious convictions—this is cowardice ; nor is it the denying their real importance—this is latitudinarianism ; nor is it the mixing of all opinions together—this is in doctrine skepticism, and in discipline confusion. No. Love adheres firmly to its own fixed principles, sustained by faith and a good conscience, and yields not the least in what it views as essential truth ; and yet regards with candour opposite errors, especially if they are not fundamental, and loves the persons of those who hold them, if they are, so far as they bear the image of Christ. Love abstains from controversy, when duty will allow ; spares an adversary, where it is possible ; conducts its argu-

ments with fairness and temper; and, if it be possible, stifles the rising irritation at once, and returns to all the offices and occupations of peace.

Let this, then, be our Christianity—*faith in Christ Jesus, and love to all the saints*; and in a day of unavoidable controversy like the present, when some of us are compelled to “contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints,” let us watch our motives, spirit, word, conduct, that all may be done with the love which becometh our Christian character. “By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples,” said our Lord, “if ye have love one to another.” “Now abideth,” says the apostle, “faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity.”

Note, p. 23.—In a proper sense, our church holds the apostolical succession, that is, the succession of bishops to the ordinary and permanent official functions of the apostles, with the careful exclusion of all claims to direct inspiration and unerring judgment. This we hold to be deducible from the appointments of Timothy and Titus, and to be designed to be continued, for the purpose of the ordination of Presbyters; for “supplying the things that are wanting;” for “charging some that they preach no other doctrine;” for confirming the young; for “exhorting and rebuking,” not merely in the way of brotherly counsel, but “with all authority;” for “rejecting” and separating “heretics after a first and second admonition;” and preserving generally the unity of the church and the purity of the faith.

All this was distinctly committed, as we think, by the apostles, with a delegated authority during their lives, to Timothy and Titus, as appears by the Epistles addressed to them. By the close of the first century, this plan of church-polity seems to have been fully established, as the letters addressed to the bishops or angels of the seven Asiatic churches prove. And that it so continued, as all history testifies, till the sixteenth century, none can deny, nor do any deny. Some of the reformed churches were, however, then compelled, with great and avowed reluctance, to follow another platform, by the impossibility of obtaining bishops. Our English reformers still considered them, however, sound sister churches. For though she accounts episcopacy to be of divine authority, being established by the apostles, who were divinely inspired to settle the infant flocks, and whose example she justly considers generally binding; yet, as there was no express command delivered by Christ himself, or his apostles, for

the continuance of this exact model of ecclesiastical polity and no other, she defines a church, in its essential properties only, as "a congregation of faithful men, in which the pure word is preached, and the sacraments be duly administered," &c., Art. xix. : that is, she does not consider episcopacy as of the essence of a church—or, as Bishop Hall well expresses it, (with whom agree all our best divines from the Reformation,) she regards episcopacy as not essential to the being, though it is to the well-being of a church. And then in Article xxxvi., and the preface to the Ordinal, she adds to the above general definition, her own explanation and application of it as to her own communion. And here she stops, without condemning or unchurching other Christian communities less perfectly constituted.

I make this statement because I observe sometimes in works in the present controversy, written by authors not well acquainted with the subject, and, as I presume, not members of our church, that the mildest assertion of episcopacy is unjustly charged with the arrogance which we abhor and disclaim.

It is of great importance that the clergy in India should be well grounded in the plain and acknowledged principles of our Protestant Episcopal Church, so as to know what they really are, and to be able to stand immovably and consistently on them, without being tossed about by the arrogant claims of Romanists on the one hand, or the loose statements of members of the reformed churches abroad or Separatists at home, on the other

So also as to the most salutary connexion of the church with the state, which we hold to be both expedient and lawful, and to be founded on the clear example of the most pious princes, and those most commended by the Almighty in the Old Testament—an example, as it appears to us, not resting on the Mosaic dispensation or its ceremonial or judicial code, but on the essential duty of a prince towards the people committed to his charge, to diffuse the means of religious instruction throughout the whole mass of his population, in the form most agreeable to Scripture truth, and most conducive, upon the whole, to the end in view; leaving an entire freedom to individuals to follow their conscientious convictions, if they peaceably prefer another course.

A reaction is always to be guarded against in such a controversy as the present, both as to doctrine and polity; and in a country like India, where our church has been so recently planted, it is necessary for the clergy to know their true position; and, whilst avoiding popery and semi-popery, not to fall into wildness and confusion.

LECTURE III.

THANKSGIVING CONTINUED FOR THE COLOSSIANS' HOPE OF HEAVEN, AND THE EFFECT OF THE GOSPEL—MINISTRY AND TESTIMONY OF EPAPHRAS.

COL. i. 5-8.

WE now proceed to the four verses which constitute the continuation of our apostle's introduction—those from the 5th to the 8th.

In these, St. Paul finishes his topics of thanksgiving for the Colossians; and bears testimony to the doctrine of Epaphras among them.

5. *For the hope which is laid up for you in heaven, wherof ye heard before in the word of the truth of the Gospel.*

Hope crowns the Christian character. Where faith in Christ precedes, and love to all the saints follows, there hope, or the expectation of future and unseen good, springs up. For "hope that is seen is not hope," says the apostle, "for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for? but if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it." This is, then, what our apostle elsewhere terms a "good hope through grace," and which "maketh not ashamed," but is "the helmet of salvation," and brings into the soul some earnest and foretastes of heaven. This is the grace which faith and love nourished; and which, founded on the blood of Christ, "sealed" by the Holy Spirit, and purifying the heart, sheds a brightness upon "the valley of the shadow of death itself."

The apostle speaks of his hope, that is, the blessing of which it is the subject, being *laid up in heaven*, deposited, reserved, put by in store out of the reach of all enemies and sorrows.

St. Paul uses this expression because the first converts

were generally persecuted and assaulted from without ; and those at Colosse were now beginning to be distracted and divided by the false teachers from within. But *the hope laid up* safely for them, and out of all danger, *in heaven*, was to be the motive to them not to let go their hold of Christ, nor to listen to seducing doctrines which would separate them from him.

So now, in India, let *the hope laid up for us in heaven* sustain us, not only under the lassitude of an unfriendly climate, the depression of natural spirits, the distance from friends, and the decline of health ; but, also, if occasion arise, against the plausible fancies of a superstitious religion, which would root up the very foundations on which a scriptural hope is built.

On earth, indeed, after all, we have only a few foretastes of the heavenly Canaan, a few grapes, as it were, from Eschol ; all is so mixed with sorrow, that the grand, and abiding, and copious fruits of salvation are *laid up* in the Canaan above, whither, across the Jordan of death, we shall soon pass, that we may there “ inherit the promises.”

Whereof ye heard before in the word of the truth of the Gospel.

“ Of which hope,” as if the apostle had said, “ ye have heard before this time when I am writing to you, from Timothy and other ministers, and especially from Epaphras, in the preaching of that Gospel which is emphatically true, or rather the truth, in contradistinction to the additions and inventions of Jewish bigotry or philosophical speculation.”

The Gospel is the glad tidings of salvation to lost sinners, not by man and his doings and fancies, but by God sending his own Son into the world to die a sacrifice for our sins, and sending the Spirit of his Son into our hearts to dispose us to receive salvation as a free and unmerited gift.

This Gospel is *the truth*, transcendently, pre-eminently the truth ; in comparison with which every thing is unimportant, and every thing which contradicts it, false.

Whatever is most excellent in different branches of knowledge is called by the term which best expresses its relative importance to the common apprehension of men. So the Gospel is the truth, the most valuable, the most interesting, the most necessary to a guilty, responsible creature.

There are other divisions of knowledge in the different sciences and arts which are not without their use ; but these do not reach our case as dying sinners. The truth of medicine cannot heal the soul ; the truth of natural philosophy cannot teach the pardon of sin. The truth of history, chronology, jurisprudence, agriculture, may all be unknown without any fatal consequences to our eternal happiness, but this truth cannot ; for it is what God has revealed for our salvation. It makes known our danger and our remedy ; it is commanding, essential, vital, of eternal moment ; it demands our belief as the first and highest act of obedience. To disbelieve it, is “ to make God a liar, because we receive not the record that God has given of his Son.” This truth false teachers of Colosse were sapping, whether knowingly or not ; and this the Colossians must hold fast, or their hope would be as a spider’s web.

So, in India, the Christian must be instructed to grasp firmly his hold of truth, desolate as he may be ; the Hindoo converts must be taught that there is one, and only one truth—that of the Gospel. And both must learn to oppose this emphatic, substantial truth, to all the dreams and delusions of popish, Mahomedan, or Brahminical fables.

The apostle speaks of *the word* of this truth, that is, of the preaching or annunciation of it ; because it is by the written word of Scripture, and the living voice of the minister of Christ, that the joyful tidings are proclaimed, as by heralds, to a lost world.

6. *Which is come unto you, as it is in all the world.*

The Gospel may here be considered as a traveller who

has set out on his journey, and intends to visit the whole habitable globe.

It travelled first in the person of St. Paul and the other apostles and evangelists, after the resurrection of our Lord and the glorious descent of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost. The heavenly messenger, having proceeded through the various parts of lesser Asia, had reached Colosse. Such rapid progress had been made, that when the apostles wrote, about thirty years from the resurrection, "the whole world," as the countries then under the Roman sway were termed, had been traversed.

Since the time of St. Paul, its course has been sometimes impeded, sometimes allowed to proceed with vigour. Our beloved native land was visited probably in the second century, though some think that St. Paul himself first planted the Gospel amongst us.*

And in every age, wherever the means of communication, with the increased population of mankind in the Old, and in the recently-discovered countries of the New World, have afforded the opportunity, the same tidings of the "word of the truth of the Gospel" have been brought.

Through the instrumentality of Britain's sons, they have reached India; and wherever our chaplains are stationed, or our missionaries begin to break up the ground, we may say

* Certainly the British churches were amongst the number of the primitive national churches of the West. We owe neither our religion, nor our orders, nor our Liturgy to Rome. In the sixth century, it is true that Austin and his monks restored, in many parts of our land, though mixed with gross errors, the Christianity which the Saxons had nearly obliterated; and we owe much to their piety and zeal; but our British bishops resisted at that early period the usurpation of Rome, which resistance our sovereigns and parliaments continued, from time to time, till Wickliffe and the Lollards first prepared for the clearer light of the Gospel; and Cranmer, Ridley, and Jewel, at last, in the sixteenth century, accomplished the glorious Reformation by the regular and canonical authority of our bishops and clergy in convocation, and under the sanction of our natural and lawful princes—so vain is the Romish insinuation that the English Reformation was an irregular, unauthorized, and hasty act.

to the few scattered flocks, as St. Paul in the instance before us, *The Gospel is come unto you, as it is in all the world.*

And bringeth forth fruit as it doth also in you, since the day ye heard it, and knew the grace of God in truth.

The Gospel is a traveller, as we have seen, in one point of view ; but as respects the word communicated, it is like a seed sown by a divine hand, having a life-giving power and influence in it, which, like vegetable life in nature, tends to the production of appropriate fruit.

“The seed of the word,” in our Lord’s parable, falling on the prepared ground, “brought forth fruit, some sixty-fold, and some thirty, and some an hundred.”

This fruit we have already adverted to, in speaking of the “faith, love, and hope,” of the Colossian converts. The apostle, however, marks the time and the intimacy of the knowledge of the Gospel, which were connected with this fruitfulness.

The peculiarity of their case and their commendation was, that, “since the day they heard it,” without any delay, any reluctance, any opposition, any gainsaying, as in other places, they at once embraced the blessed tidings—that, as the Bereans, “they received the word with all readiness of mind.”

The apostle adds, “And knew the grace of God in truth,” and not with the perversions and corrupt admixtures of the false teachers. They understood, apprehended, experienced the Gospel to be “the grace of God in truth” to their souls ; felt its blessed efficacy, were renewed and changed by its power, were touched really and deeply by the love of God manifested by it to guilty man, and saw all the infinite grace which it revealed.

Let us closely examine ourselves, brethren, on these points. The Gospel messengers have come to us ; have we received them as bringing the grace of God in truth ? We have heard of this grace, often and often before this time, from their lips ; has it brought forth in us the fruits of “faith,

hope, charity ?” Have we “ a hope laid up in heaven ?” Or are we living “ without hope and without God in the world ?” Do we see that the one grand, commanding truth for a dying sinner, is the word of the Gospel ?

Remember, there is a time marked in the Epistle as to the fruitfulness of the Colossians—let it be marked also as to us. If not before, yet now, from this very day that we are again hearing of it, let it be said of us that we began to bring forth fruit.

7. *As ye also heard of Epaphras, our dear fellow-servant, who is for you a faithful minister of Christ.*

St. Paul bears this testimony to the doctrine of Epaphras, that he might stop the progress of the new inventions in religion, of which this faithful minister had brought him an account, by assuring them of the soundness of the doctrine Epaphras had been preaching among them.

He speaks of him with affectionate confidence, *As ye have also heard of Epaphras, our dear fellow-servant.* There is no jealousy amongst the true ministers of Christ. God gives them different gifts, and places them in different stations : some are young and inexperienced : others, like Paul the aged, are full of faith and love : some are in the lower, and others in the higher ministries of the church ; but charity and mutual esteem unite them all, as St. Paul with Epaphras.

The apostle himself had been more than once in Phrygia ; but not being able to visit every city, he had probably sent on Epaphras, who is supposed by many to be the same with Epaphroditus, to preach the Gospel to them, as he was a native, or at least an inhabitant, of Colosse.*

St. Paul, in mentioning him, says not a word of his own imprisonment, lest the Colossians should be grieved ; but, after calling him his dear fellow-servant, adds his testimony to his fidelity, whatever the false apostles might insinuate, *who is for you a faithful minister of Christ.*

*—“ Who is one of you.” Col. iv. 12 ; Phil. ii. 25 ; iv. 18.

8. *Who also declared to us your love in the Spirit.*

We had one summary of the Christian character before—“faith in Christ Jesus, love to all the saints, and a hope laid up in heaven.” But here is a more compendious one still. The leading grace of their hearts was love. If one point only can be touched on, it shall be, not so much faith or hope, as love; love in the spirit, proceeding from the Holy Ghost, of a spiritual and genuine nature, and relating to spiritual hopes and joys.

This is the temper of heaven. Faith will cease when superseded by sight; hope will hereafter be swallowed up in enjoyment; but love will remain, the most appropriate mark of the true Christian under all circumstances on earth; the most important grace especially, in a time of conflict in the visible church, and the best preparation for a world of love in heaven. Let us ask ourselves whether our faithful ministers could declare of us, wherever they went, “this love in the Spirit,” as the characteristic and prominent feature of our religion? And let us pray to the Holy Ghost to shed abroad more copiously this love in all our hearts!

LECTURE IV.

THE APOSTLE'S PRAYER FOR THE PROGRESS OF THE COLOSSIANS
IN SPIRITUAL KNOWLEDGE AND CHRISTIAN GRACES.

Col. i. 9—11.

THE apostle, in these verses, closes his introduction with a most sublime and comprehensive prayer for the progress of the Colossians in grace.

9. *For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you.*

From the day that Epaphras had brought St. Paul tidings of their "love in the Spirit," he began his unceasing prayers.

We should lose no time in addressing ourselves to prayer for those in whom we hear that a "good work,"¹ as the apostle speaks, has been begun. And in this holy exercise we must not relax nor forget the daily recurring duty. Prayer for others demands watchfulness, assiduity, earnestness, frequency, resolute perseverance, with such hearts as ours.

Three principal blessings St. Paul implores in these three verses for the Colossians,—knowledge, holiness, and strength under suffering.

By dwelling on these topics in his prayers, he intimates that, whatever attainments they had made, they had still much knowledge to acquire, much higher measures of holiness to attain, and much still to suffer in resisting the partisans of errors within and without the church; and thus he paves the way for further instruction and warnings.

9. And to desire that ye may be filled with the knowledge of his will.

Those who think they know enough, and disdain instruction, are the very persons to be beguiled by ensnaring teachers. But we must, on the contrary, aim at feeling and acknowledging our great remaining ignorance, and strive to be *filled*, more and more, *with the knowledge of God's will*—not his secret will, which "belongs to the Lord our God,"² and is not the rule of our conduct, nor to be known, except by being traced out humbly and cautiously, after the events of things in providence and grace have taken place; but his revealed will, as openly declared in the preaching of the apostles, and committed to writing in the inspired Scriptures for our instruction and salvation. We are not to content ourselves with a partial, hasty knowledge of it; with gen-

1) Phil. i. 6.

2) Deut. xxxix. 29.

eral notions, or a few points; but to seek to be replenished and filled with it; not as a vessel which has merely a few drops at the bottom, but as one filled up to the brim with the heavenly doctrine.

This we must acquire by frequent meditation upon Scripture and comparison of all its parts; by considering and weighing every word of the Holy Ghost; by using all the means of arriving at a right interpretation, especially by a diligent attendance on the ministry of the church; by studying every portion of the Old Testament histories, prophecies, types, ceremonies, devotional compositions, moral maxims, in connexion with the motives and hopes of the Gospel; and every part of the New with the reflex light of former dispensations.

If any points not before known come under our view, we must treasure them up in our memory and receive them with implicit faith, if they are truly what they appear to be.

If other points were not clearly apprehended in their harmony with the rest of the Gospel, we must endeavour to seize their true bearing.

Especially, "the mystery of Christ among the Gentiles;" Christ "the fulness of the Godhead bodily;" Christ in whom they were to be "complete,"³ without Jewish ceremonies or the mediation of angels, is to be studied, till those points of scriptural truth fill the mind with solid knowledge, and leave no room for human inventions.

9. *In all wisdom and spiritual understanding.*

Wisdom is the use and employment to their best ends of all the materials which knowledge brings together and lays up in the mind.

Knowledge is the furniture of the understanding; wisdom the right disposal of it. A man may have extensive knowledge and but little wisdom; and, on the other hand, much

³ Col. 27; ii. 9, 10.

practical wisdom, and little knowledge. Wisdom pursues the highest end by the best means.

Spiritual understanding stands opposed to a gross carnal effort of the merely rational powers—it is the result of the light of the Holy Spirit shining upon the heart by means of the written Word. It distinguishes false from true claims, specious errors from solid truth, plausible self-invented schemes for promoting the glory of Christ, from sound and scriptural efforts to that end.

By *wisdom and spiritual understanding* the Christians at Colosse would be led to “distinguish things that differ;”⁴ to detect the sophistry of new teachers; to discern the dangerous bearings of ingenious but seducing systems; to keep close to the letter and spirit of Scripture; to look around on the whole compass of truth and all the methods of God’s dispensations before they committed themselves to any conclusive opinion; to use every part of divine revelation for the purposes, and in the proportion, and according to the order, and in the spirit of the divinely inspired record.

In this view, next to a devout and evangelical ministry, (for the want of which nothing can compensate,) a learned ministry is of great moment. Principles of sound logic imbibed; a mind trained and exercised to reasoning by the exact sciences; a thorough knowledge of the languages from which and into which the Bible is translated; the rules of the grammatical interpretation of human speech; stores of ecclesiastical history laid up in the memory; chronology, manners and customs of the times and people referred to in the Bible; the writings of ancient and modern divines and commentators; a humble, enlightened, and cautious criticism, built up of all these materials. Such are the ordinary means, now that miraculous inspiration has ceased, of attaining to *wisdom and spiritual understanding* in Scripture truth.

In this way a learned ministry is reared, if only there be added to all this furniture, heartfelt, personal piety, fervent

4) Phil. i. 10.

prayer for divine aid, deep humility, and holy love of Christ and souls—for without these right dispositions, a mere mass of undigested learning can only furnish arms for self-conceit, and new inventions, and sophistry, as we have seen in the case of schoolmen and Jesuits for so many centuries.

10. *That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God.*

Here the apostle prays for their growth in that holiness in which all knowledge, and wisdom, and spiritual understanding terminate, and which will improve the discerning faculty, and cause it to increase soundly and truly in the further knowledge of God.

For Christianity is not a speculation, a philosophical theory. All its discoveries, all its light, all its knowledge, are designed to lead to practice; and if they are not employed for this end, they soon degenerate into human vagaries of “will-worship,” or pure enthusiasm, or even into skepticism and secret unbelief.

The apostle prays that we may *walk worthy of the Lord*. Christianity is a walk, a steady progress to a heavenly country; and there is but one road leading to it, the “way of holiness;”⁵ and the life-giving motives and grace of the Gospel are designed to dispose and enable us to tread this road; whilst “wisdom and spiritual understanding” are given us to distinguish bye-paths from the main high track of God’s truth and of God’s commandments.

Thus we are to *walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing*; “walk worthy of the vocation wherewith we are called,” “to bring forth fruits worthy of repentance;”⁶ in all which places and others, the word “worthy” means what is meet, what is not repugnant to the vocation we profess to follow, and the repentance we say we exercise, but befitting and agreeable to both.

The merit of condignity in our doings we utterly re-

5) Isai. xxxv. 8.

6) Eph. iv. 1. Luke iii. 8.

nounce; but the worthiness and suitableness of the Christian's walk to the character he bears, we constantly enforce. Our walk must answer to the blessings bestowed upon us by our adorable Lord and Saviour. The practice of the whole Christian life is summed up in this one direction, *to walk worthy of the Lord*; which chiefly consists in copying the blessed example of his holy life when on earth, his charity, his purity, his deadness to the world, his wisdom, his gentleness to his disciples, his discretion, his fortitude, his justice, his consideration for his adversaries, his meekness, his benevolence, his devotion, his patience in suffering, his love to his heavenly Father, and delight to do his will.

The apostle adds, *Unto all pleasing*. We must seek in all things to please God, and confirm ourselves to do his blessed will. The scope and end of every action, word, thought, purpose, motive, should be to please God. And though we cannot do this as we would wish, on account of the remains of indwelling sin, daily temptations and infirmities, and the frailty of the flesh, yet this will be our main intention and primary purpose. Like a traveller, our steps will be directed and our face turned steadily this way, though we may not always, so much as we might, keep our minds fixed directly on our journey's end.

Being fruitful in every good work, as living branches of the true vine, and "trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that he may be glorified."⁷

We must not be like the fig-tree in the Gospel, to which our Lord came, if haply he might find fruit thereon, but finding nothing but leaves, pronounced his curse, and immediately the fig-tree withered away.

Christianity in the heart is a plant springing from an "incorruptible seed, the word of God,"⁸ and bringing forth fruit after its kind. The natural tree, indeed, only bears one kind,—the trees of righteousness all manner of fruit,—each in its season, every branch being loaded with rich and

7) Isa. lxi. 3.

8) 1 Pet. i. 23.

valuable produce. "Being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ to the praise and glory of God,"⁹ saith the apostle in his prayer for the Philippians.

And these fruits are of a sound quality—*fruitful in every good work*—the works commanded of God, enjoined by his Gospel, and beneficial to our neighbour—solid, tangible, undoubted good works—not vain superstitions, not external ceremonies, not the traditions of men, which "make the law of God of none effect,"¹⁰ not the trifling puerilities of self-invented forms, but the works commanded of the Lord, and directed to his glory.

And this will reflect its light on the powers of the understanding, for we shall be, at the same time, and in consequence of this fruitfulness in every good work, *increasing yet further in the knowledge of God*.

What can be more beautiful than the morals of Christianity? Her mysteries are not more sublime than her commands are pure and elevated. Christian practice is as original as Christian doctrine—both have the clear impress of the divine hand. No human scheme can imitate the one or the other.

How absurd, then, is it to raise objections against the truth of Christianity on the ground of the bad lives of some of those who bear its name without understanding its discoveries, believing its doctrines, or submitting to its precepts.

Is there any vice, we ask, which Christianity countenances, any virtue which it omits to enforce?

But if men will be content with gathering their notions of the Gospel, not from its doctrines and precepts, but from the conduct of those who merely hang loosely upon it, and scarcely profess to obey it, we can only deplore an infatuation which we have no means of dispelling.

11. *Strengthened with all might according to his glorious power, unto all patience and long-suffering with joyfulness.*

⁹) Phil i. 10.

¹⁰) Mark xv. 13.

Besides knowledge and holiness, we need strength, consolation, support, under the persecutions which may arise from without, and the errors and distractions from within the church.

We have also various family and personal afflictions, each of us, to bear from the chastising hand of our heavenly Father. Our weakness in all these respects, and in spiritual things especially, is so great, and our enemies as to every thing good so powerful and numerous, and so obstinately bent on our ruin, that we need an extraordinary supply of strength continually, in order to hold on our way.

And, thank God, there is an inward might administered by the Holy Ghost which exactly meets our case, and without which, indeed, we could not endure in a single combat.

The Psalmist speaks of this strength, "In the day when I cried, Thou answeredst me, and strengthenedst me with strength in my soul."¹¹

And so our apostle, in a parallel passage of his Epistle to the Ephesians. "That he would grant you according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man."¹²

How much we need this strength we may learn from the emphasis of the apostle's language, *Strengthened with all might according to his glorious power*. How sublime, how consolatory, how condescending, how exactly adapted to our wants, how adequate to all possible emergencies! Whatever is the power of God himself, that will be engaged in infusing, not one, but every degree of strength—*all might*—all kinds and measures of inward power and strength, as we need them; and as we see exemplified in the enumeration of the eleventh chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews, and other parts of Scripture.

This power the apostle describes as *glorious*, both in this passage and in the corresponding one which I have cited; because God is pleased to place his peculiar glory in the

11) Psalm cxxxviii. 3.

12) Eph. iii. 16.

operations of his grace. The "heavens, indeed, declare the glory of God,"¹³ and the dispensations of providence display his wisdom and love; but it is in the internal victories which he enables the weakest saints to achieve over the most powerful adversaries, that God makes known most illustriously the glory of his wisdom, his love, his goodness, his grace. The martyr at the stake, the Christian in the agonies of death, are the glorious triumphs of the divine arm. Stephen full of the Holy Ghost, praying for his murderers; Paul amidst unnumbered sufferings; the primitive Christians during the persecutions of the first three centuries; the Albigenses and Waldenses under the iron yoke of Rome in the middle ages; and the Reformers in the sixteenth, are all illustrations of the *glorious power* of God in the strength he infuses into the hearts of his suffering saints.

Thus "out of weakness the Lord ordains strength," and enables his servants to say, "When I am weak, then am I strong;" "most gladly, therefore, will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me."¹⁴

Thus the lower we sink in ourselves, the higher we rise in a humble reliance on this *glorious power* of our present God. The darker the night, the more splendid the "day-star" which arises in our hearts. Faith never appears so bright as when it is the only light that shines.

The result is, that *with all patience and long-suffering with joyfulness* we sustain the conflict.

However heavy the trial may be, we oppose to it *patience* in sustaining the load. However long-continued and repeated the affliction, we oppose *long-suffering* to it, which waits all God's time, and says, "Blessed is the man that endureth temptation, for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life."¹⁵

Nor is joy absent. St. Paul adds, *with joyfulness*; and so in the Epistle to the Romans, "We glory in tribulation;"¹⁶ and St. James, "Brethren, count it all joy when ye

13) Psalm xiv. 1.

14) 2 Cor. xi. 1.

15) James i. 12.

16) Rom. v. 3.

fall into divers temptations.”¹⁷ And thus “the apostles went forth from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name.”¹⁸

His cheerful resignation under the severest afflictions, gilded with holy joy, is peculiar to the Christian doctrine, and was never pretended to in any other, much less produced. But in the Gospel it is the appropriate fruit of all the discoveries of grace there made, as applied by the Holy Ghost with efficacy to the heart.

Let us, then, direct our prayers and endeavours to these three main heads of St. Paul’s sublime supplication for the Colossians—uniting them all in equal proportion, and omitting no one of them. Let us advance in *knowledge*, guarded on each hand by *wisdom and spiritual understanding*. Let us apply all this light to our growth in practical obedience *unto all well pleasing and fruitfulness in every good work*; and let us leave our trials and persecutions, our spiritual enemies and foes, the errors of false teachers around us, and our own weakness and impotency, to *the glorious power* of the Holy Ghost.

So, whatever may await us, whatever invasions of false doctrines, whatever assault of revived popery, whatever dreams of heathen philosophy, we shall by the first of them be able to frustrate their designs by a full *knowledge of God’s will* in Holy Scripture, wisely and spiritually understood and applied; we shall by the second resist them by a steady pursuit of manly and solid and divinely commanded good works: whilst by the third we repose in all emergencies, for the *might* we need, on the power of our reconciled and covenant God, who places his highest glory in displaying the triumphs of his grace and power in the weakness of those whom he carries on to final victory.

17) James i. 2.

18) Acts v. 41.

LECTURE V.

DISTINGUISHING BLESSINGS OF REDEMPTION—MEETNESS FOR HEAVEN, AND TRANSLATION FROM THE POWER OF DARKNESS TO THE KINGDOM OF CHRIST.

Col. i. 12, 13.

WE are coming now into the very heart of St. Paul. The preface or exordium to the whole Epistle being finished, ver. 1—11, the apostle prepares to enter upon his principal subject, the inexhaustible fulness of Christ to save them that believe, without the addition of human traditions, Jewish ceremonies, or philosophical speculations.

He enters upon this in the verses before us, which describe some of the distinguishing blessings of the redemption of Christ in its application to the soul of man. 1. A meetness for heaven communicated; and 2. In order to this, a deliverance from the power of Satan vouchsafed.

12. *Giving thanks unto the Father who hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light.*

For praise still fills the heart of the apostle when he considers the immense benefits bestowed on the Colossian converts, contrasted with their former state.

He had already thanked God for the general and incipient blessings of faith in Christ Jesus, love to all the saints, and the hope laid up for them in heaven. He now blesses God for the stupendous benefits from which these primary graces flowed, and in the completion of which also they would terminate.

He repeats his thanksgiving, in this verse, in order to raise the minds of the Colossians under their sorrows and fears. Let them not be too much depressed, nor let sophists and false brethren bewilder them—the solid blessings of

Christ are more than a counterbalance for all their tribulations. Let them still give thanks and praise to God the Father for his mercies towards them, and press on to the full enjoyment of them in heaven.

Who hath made us meet. Meetness is a suitableness, a fitness for a certain state or certain employments; a disposition of heart, of feeling, of habits, adapted to a certain condition, namely, the society of *the saints in light*.

Meetness is a very different thing from pardon and justification; and the attempt to confound it with them, and thus build up man's merits on the ruin of Christ's righteousness, is the fundamental error of too many of our modern divines, as well as of the Tridentine fathers.

This meetness is an internal change, gradually produced by the Holy Spirit by the renewing of the soul, which fits and prepares the fallen and corrupt heart of man for holy pleasures, holy duties, and holy society in the heavenly world.

By nature we have no meetness, no preparation, no qualification, no congruity, no capacity, for partaking of *the inheritance of the saints in light*.

We have not only no right nor title, because we are sinners and have broken the law of God, and are under the curse; but, besides that, we are excluded by having no taste, no possibility of finding happiness in a holy heaven. We should be out of our element there—it would afford us no gratification—it would be distasteful, incongruous, miserable to us.

There is “a carnal mind” in each of us, which is “enmity against God.”¹ There is a will opposed to the divine will. There are affections full of impurity, disorder, perturbation, opposition to holiness. There is an understanding darkened, besotted, “alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in us, because of the hardness of our hearts.”² There are false notions attached to the words

1) Rom. viii. 7.

2) Eph. iv. 18.

happiness, pleasure, satisfaction. The business of heaven, the perpetual songs of praise, the incessant contemplation, adoration, love of infinite holiness there exercised, the converse with holy beings, the ceaseless effusions of perfect love to God and his saints, would afford us no delight. For "the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned."³ Nor will the offers of the Gospel, nor a profession of belief in it, nor the outward privileges and sacraments of the church, if there be nothing more, make us fit. "No man can come unto me," saith our Lord, "except the Father which hath sent me, draw him."⁴

But God makes us meet by the interior operations of his Spirit, with which he is pleased to accompany the preaching of the Gospel. "The Lord opened the heart of Lydia, that she attended to the things spoken of Paul."⁵ "By grace ye are saved through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God."⁶ "Then hath God unto the Gentiles also granted repentance unto life."⁷

To be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light.

The apostle uses the expression, *partakers of the inheritance*, with reference to the division by lot of the land of Canaan to the several tribes and families of Israel; and he intimates, that in like manner we are made meet to be partakers, to have our allotted portions, of the inheritance of the heavenly Canaan. Agreeable to this, "Come, ye blessed of my Father," will be the welcome at last, "inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world."⁸

This implies, what is the truth of the case, that we do not attain the heavenly glory by our own works or doings in the way of merit, but in the way of inheritance, a free gift, in consequence of the will and testament of our dying Saviour, who purchased the inheritance for us, for which the

3) 1 Cor. ii. 14.

4) John vi. 44.

5) Acts xvi. 14.

6) Eph. ii. 8.

7) Acts xi. 18.

8) Matt. xxv. 34.

Father is pleased to fit us and make us meet by the operations of his Spirit.

This inheritance is of *the saints in light*. The saints are now in much darkness, in sorrow, in heaviness through divers temptations, in troubles, storms, afflictions.

Though brought "out of darkness" already "into the marvellous light of the Gospel,"⁹ compared with the total blindness of the heathen and ungodly; yet they are in so much remaining affliction and sorrow, that, compared with the glorious light and bliss of heaven, their state is a dark one still.

It is only hereafter that they will be *saints in light*, absolutely and entirely; in joy without intermixture; in felicity without alloy; in light without obscurity; in holiness without defect; in entire freedom from darkness, temptation, sorrow, trouble, change. There the saints will walk in the unclouded light of the beatific vision. "The city will have no need of the sun, neither of the moon to shine in it; for the glory of God will lighten it, and the Lamb will be the light thereof."¹⁰

Giving thanks unto the Father. What gratitude, then, is due to the Father for this immense benefit; for St. Paul directs our praises especially to "the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ," because he is the original and efficient cause of our salvation, and because the apostle was about to enter upon a sublime description of the deity and glory of the Son in the mystery of grace.

Seek, brethren, more and more of this *meetness*; the world, and India especially, is an unfavourable place for acquiring or preserving it. Watch against the temptations to decline from God which may assault you. Judge of your state by a growing desire after a heavenly world, and a growing meetness for it. And implore of the Father, through the merits of his Son, to vouchsafe you more of the grace of the Holy Spirit to carry on the sanctification of

9) 1 Peter ii.

10) Rev. xxi. 23.

your souls. And let all the afflictions, and sorrows, and comparative darkness of this world have the blessed effect of quickening your desires and anticipations for the unclouded joy and brightness of the next.

13. *Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son, or, as the margin reads, the Son of his love.*

The apostle now proceeds to show in what particular way the process of preparation for heaven was begun in the Colossians. It was by a deliverance or rescue effected by an exertion of Almighty power, from the kingdom of darkness, and a translation into the kingdom of light and truth.

For there are two kingdoms in the world of opposite characters, under opposite masters, and tending to opposite ends; the kingdom of Satan and the kingdom of Christ.

The one is here termed, *the power of darkness*; as in another passage, which strongly illustrates this; "To open their eyes," said our Lord, when sending forth St. Paul for the conversion of the Gentiles, "to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God."

This kingdom or power of darkness is visible and manifest in the world.

Cast an eye, brethren, first, on the vast regions of India. What do you see? *The power of darkness*, of ignorance, alienation from God, misery, sin. There Satan reigns, amidst the profound obscurity, with not a ray of light, except the remnants of tradition and the faint voice of conscience. There broods a midnight darkness as to the first principles of religion, the object of worship, the rule of human duty, the fall and corruption of nature, the means of expiation, the way of renewing and changing the disposition of the soul.

Read the first chapter of our apostle's address to the Romans, or his second and fourth of that to the Ephesians, and you will have the whole state of the heathen world, as

it was eighteen hundred years since, and as it is now developed. There you will learn how men, "professing themselves to be wise, became fools;" and how God "gave them up," and still gives them up, "to a reprobate mind, to work all uncleanness with greediness."

This explains the darkness of their philosophy, their speculations about the Deity and the origin of the world, their mania or illusion, their pretended absorption into God, their professed freedom from all passion and perturbation, their metempsychosis, &c. We thus learn that, not only are all these consistent with, but are productive of the basest vices; the total want of truth, the absence of social and domestic purity, the confusion of all the first rules of morals—their very religious rites obscene.

Turn, next, to the Mahomedans, and see the false prophet, with his pretended revelation in the one hand, and his sword of conquest in the other; his plagiarisms and mutilations of the Holy Scriptures; his plurality of wives; his encouragement of revenge, and his sensual paradise; his contempt and hatred of Christians; and his deluded followers sunk in equal vices and more bitter hostility to the Gospel, than the absolute heathen—all is "darkness that may," as it were, "be felt."

Extend your view, next, to the multitudes, who, like the Jews, with whom St. Paul remonstrated in the second chapter of his Epistle to the Romans, are in fact living in the very vices and ignorance of the heathen. They are born in a Christian country, they are baptized into the Christian faith; they have been taught Christian catechisms, they adhere perhaps to a national creed; they have floating general notions of some of the broader features of the Christian doctrine. But alas! their ignorance, pride, uncleanness, lasciviousness, adultery, fornication, malice, hatred, carelessness even of the forms of religion, love of pleasure, profaneness, gluttony, drunkenness, enmity against God, hatred of those whom they despise as saints, secret unbelief of the Bible,

(which, like the infidel Hume, they have perhaps never read,) proclaim them as still belonging to the kingdom of Satan.

But *the power of darkness*, lastly, extends still wider—to the mere outwardly decent, the amiable, the ignorant, the worldly-minded and thoughtless, the secular and covetous, the ambitious and proud, the self-righteous and self-satisfied, the “lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God;”¹¹ to all who are without repentance, without faith, without spiritual life, without love, without prayer, without union with Christ, without the Holy Spirit, “dead in trespasses and sins.”¹²

To this dark and terrific power of Satan, this kingdom of sin and misery, leading to everlasting darkness and woe, is opposed, not the kingdom of light, as we might have expected from the other member of the contrast, but *the kingdom of God's dear Son*, or yet more tenderly in the margin, *of the Son of his love*, “in whom his soul delighted;”¹³ on whose person, and work, and atonement for sin, the Father reposed with entire complacency and satisfaction.

This is only another term for the kingdom of light, of truth, of holiness, of peace, of felicity.

“God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.” “I am the light of the world,” proclaimed the Son of God's love when on earth. “Arise, shine,” saith the prophet, “for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee. For behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people; but the Lord shall arise upon thee, and his glory shall be seen upon thee. And the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising.”¹⁴

Here is the kingdom of light indeed, of the Holy Ghost, of the Gospel of Christ, of salvation, of purity and joy.

This kingdom is seen, wherever the Church of Christ is set up in the world: wherever the Lord's day is consecrated; the Bible received as the rule of faith; the public worship of God celebrated in the assemblies of the faithful; the Gospel

11) 2 Tim. iii. 4.

12) Eph. ii. 1.

13) Isa. xlii. 1.

14) Isa. lx. 1, 2.

preached, the divinely-constituted polity of church-order, and ministration of the word and sacraments duly observed.

The true and faithful members of this kingdom of Christ, are those who are really united to him by living faith, as the branches to the vine, and deriving from him life and grace by his Holy Spirit in the use of the means which he has appointed.

Wherever all over the world there is a soul born of God, believing in Christ, loving God, and walking in his commandments and ordinances, there is a subject of Christ's kingdom.

The translation from one to the other kingdom is what the apostle especially marks ; *and hath translated us*, (for he joins himself, though a Jew and a Pharisee, and "touching the righteousness of the law blameless," with the Gentiles, as I have already observed,) *into the kingdom of his dear Son*. The words *delivered, translated*, mark the greatness of the change, and the Almighty power exerted in effecting it. It is a removal, it is a transfer, it is a going out from the darkness and imprisonment of sin, as in the redemption from Egypt or Babylon, and a passing into a land of light, and freedom, and joy, as that of Canaan of old.

The translation has various aspects. In the case of heathens converted to God, it is broad, palpable, manifest ; including an open change in all the habits and associations, all the motives, spirit and conduct of the convert ; as in the case of the Philippian jailer, or the Colossians.

In the instance of notorious sinners under the Christian name ; unbelievers, scorners, ungodly profligates, the change, though often gradual, and therefore less striking, is equally true and almost equally broad in its chief characteristics.

In the cases of decent, quiet, respectable individuals, self-righteous, (like St. Paul before his conversion,) and perhaps bitter in their contempt of the truly evangelical doctrines of

the Gospel, the change, like that of Lydia and the Bereans, is generally more secret and imperceptible as to its several steps, though just as real.

In all these classes, the translation is openly professed and recognized before the church in the sacrament of holy baptism, either upon their first conversion, as in the instance of heathen and Mahomedans; or upon the vows and promises made for them in their non-age, to all the blessings, of which then conditionally conveyed and sealed, they put in their title when truly translated into the kingdom of Christ by faith.

Let us see to it, my beloved brethren, that this translation is clear and decided in each of us, by "our casting off" more and more the opinions and "works of darkness," and "putting on the armour of light," with its motives and grace. Let us obey more and more our heavenly King. Let us thus be acquiring an increased meetness for the inheritance of the saints in light.

LECTURE VI.

THE FORGIVENESS OF SINS—JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH.

COL. i. 14.

THE apostle proceeds in this verse to describe the third distinguishing benefit of the Gospel in its application to man.

Having shown the meetness for heaven which the Father communicates; and the deliverance from the power of darkness which he vouchsafes, in order that this meetness may be begun, ver. 12, 13, he states, in the verse now before us, the primary and fundamental blessing of the forgiveness of sins, on which the two preceding benefits, and all others, rest.

The deliverance and translation just spoken of supposed a ransom. The meetness for heaven which that deliverance commenced in the soul, involved the idea of a right to the inheritance having been purchased.

The apostle, then, here shows the connexion of these blessings with the forgiveness of sins, and with the redemption in the blood of Christ, of which that forgiveness formed the chief part.

14. *In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins.*

In remarking on this most important verse, we must go on step by step with St. Paul. 1. The deliverance described in the preceding verse was *a redemption*. 2. This was *through the blood of Christ*. 3. And the primary blessing was *the forgiveness of sins*.

1. *In whom we have redemption.* This explains the particular nature of the deliverance from the kingdom of darkness. It was not a mere rescue, as of a slave liberated by the compassion of his master; nor that of a debtor set free at his earnest entreaties by his creditor and lord, as in the parable of the ten thousand talents; nor by the exertion of force only, as Abraham delivered Lot, and David his followers from the Amalekites at Ziklag.

But this deliverance from Satan's dominion is *a redemption*, a rescue by a ransom-price paid down. There is a valuable consideration, as it were, first given; there is a discharge of all that was due to the law, righteousness and truth of God, by a substitute or surety, a "daysman coming between" the offended Majesty of heaven and us, and making a full satisfaction to divine justice on our behalf. "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us."

2. *Through his blood.* The apostle now teaches us that

this satisfaction is especially by the blood of Christ, that is, by his death upon the cross, when he poured out his heart's blood, as the last and greatest act of his mediatorial work on earth, and "brought in eternal redemption for us."

The Scriptures constantly give a prominence to this part of our Lord's bitter sufferings. We are not said to be redeemed by his incarnation, by his birth, by his miracles, by his doctrine, though all these were necessary to the ransom—but *by his blood*. "Whom God hath set forth for a propitiation through faith in his blood," saith our apostle. "Much more, then, being now justified by his blood." "Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood He entered in once into the holy place."¹ "We are not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold—but by the precious blood of Christ, as of a Lamb without blemish and without spot."²

2. *Even the forgiveness of sins.* St. Paul having thus explained how this deliverance was effected, that is, by the redemption of Christ; and in what manner that redemption was obtained, by his blood; proceeds to mention the great and principal blessing proceeding from it, and in which redemption principally consists, even the forgiveness of sins.

Christ gave his soul as an oblation for sin, and paid the price of our ransom; he made a satisfaction to the injured law and moral government of Almighty God, in order that we might receive by faith the remission of sins, and all other consequent blessings, as the fruit of this first and commanding one.

This great act of divine mercy, the forgiveness of sins, is expressed by various terms in holy Scripture. It is described as the "passing by of sin;" the "blotting of it out;" the "not seeing or beholding it;" the "remembering it no more;" the "casting it behind the back;" the plunging it

1) Heb. ix. 12.

2) 1 Pet. i. 19.

“into the depths of the sea ;” the effacing it “as a debt ;” the “not imputing it to us.”

And when the idea of the penitent believer’s being accounted and dealt with as righteous at God’s tribunal, in opposition to condemnation, is added, it is what the apostle terms, in a forensic or judicial sense, “the righteousness of God ;” or “justification through the redemption of Christ, without the deeds of the law.”

All these expressions describe generally, though in somewhat different lights, the same mighty act—the remission of sin as to its guilt and punishment, with all its consequences, and the restoring of the humble believer, by faith only, to the divine favour and acceptance, and the title of a heavenly inheritance, for the merits and on the account of “the obedience unto death” of our Lord Christ.

The apostle treats it in this Epistle in its simplest form, as the forgiveness of sins, probably because the danger at Colosse lay not so much, as amongst the Galatians, on the side of direct attacks on the doctrine of justification, as on that of inventions and traditions of men and the worship of angels, which tended to sap the entire glory of Christ’s person and the blessings of his mediation.

In human affairs, forgiveness is often a partial and slight act, and always falls extremely short of what is meant by divine forgiveness in Scripture. Amongst men, in the ordinary sense of the term, one mortal pardons another mortal, at the command of God, and for the love of Christ, for some trifling offence ; and remits some inconsiderable punishment.

In the transactions, however, of human tribunals, when the king, of his mere mercy, forgives a criminal, or reverses the attainder of a rebel, he not only pardons him in the common sense of the term, but restores him to his station, and replaces him before the face of the law, in the position in which he was before the sentence of condemnation had been pronounced.

Still this reaches not the amplitude of the divine act of

forgiveness in the redemption by the blood of Christ in any of its branches. There is no satisfaction made, no reparation of the broken law. It is mere commiseration; nor is there any restoration to the idea of innocence or righteousness.

But divine forgiveness is the solemn act of God, the Judge of all, remitting, for the sake of an infinite ransom paid down by our divine substitute, the guilt and punishment of all our unnumbered sins, for time and eternity, and restoring the believing soul to all the rights and blessings of acceptance here, and of the heavenly inheritance hereafter; as if he were personally righteous and innocent. The pardon rests upon the law being satisfied by sufferings and obedience.

This forgiveness, therefore, in fact, brings with it all the blessings enumerated in the passages I have referred to, and others. It embraces the "covering of sin," and the "not imputing our trespasses unto us." It is more: it involves the actual "imputing of righteousness without works." This is not all; it goes on, and leads to, and terminates in, "the justifying" of us, though "ungodly," that is, the accounting us and dealing with us as "partakers of the righteousness of God in Christ."

These several parts of the blessing may be often traced out distinctly in Scripture, and are always implied. Thus "David," saith the apostle, "describeth the blessedness of the man to whom the Lord imputeth righteousness without works; saying, Blessed is the man whose iniquity is forgiven, and whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin."³ Here several of the steps are clearly marked.

And again, "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them." "For He hath made Him to be sin for us who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him."⁴ Here the remaining steps are noted. This completes the description. Such is the amplitude of forgiveness of sins.

3) Rom. iv. 7.

4) 2 Cor. v. 19, 20.

The instrument whereby we obtain this immense and incomprehensible blessing is faith, as I noticed in a preceding lecture at some length.*

“Being justified by faith, we have peace with God;” “Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace,” is the apostle’s language.

And this stands in opposition to any reliance on the deeds of the law in point of merit, that is, to the “going about to establish our own righteousness”⁵ by our own obedience to the law, moral or ceremonial. “To him that worketh,” argues divinely our apostle, when treating expressly on this article, “is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt; but to him that worketh not, but believeth on Him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.”⁶

For faith receiving and relying on the free promises of forgiveness made us in Christ Jesus, is the link, the bond of connexion between the blessings purchased by Christ, and the soul of the penitent. Faith receives and relies on “the record which God hath given us of his Son,”⁷ applies for the benefits of Christ for itself; enters, as it were, the ark like Noah; looks to the brazen serpent as the dying Israelite; flies to the city of refuge as the man-slayer; receives as a beggar the gift of righteousness; builds with St. Paul on the “sure foundation in Zion.”⁸

And thus faith justifies; not as a work, nor as an act of merit on our part, but as the grace which alone forms the union between the promise and the soul of the individual penitent. And, therefore, we are justified, not by love, not by hope, not by penitence, not by deeds of charity, not by mortification of sin, (though all these things are found in the man who is justified,) but by a living, penitent faith, which trusts the naked promise of God for forgiveness on the footing of *the blood of Christ*, and answers the accusations of the

* Lecture ii. verse 6.

5) Rom. x. 3.

7) 1 John v.

6) Rom. iv. 4, 5.

8) Cor.

law, the terrors of conscience, and the fear of death, by referring to its divine Surety dying on the cross.

Hold fast, then, brethren, by this sheet-anchor of our hope, *the forgiveness of sins through the blood of Christ*. Pray for more faith to embrace and rejoice in the mighty promise in all its amplitude, and in the full import of all the descriptions given of it in Holy Scripture.

Reject with abhorrence the popish doctrine, that God remits the guilt, but not the punishment of sin, and therefore that purgatory still remains to be endured; away with the impious notion of inherent or personal righteousness as the ground of justification. Away with the pretended merit and efficacy of human penances, satisfactions, and indulgences; nor less with the inventions of a vain philosophy in refining away the doctrine of pardon as laid down in the Gospel. *The forgiveness of sins through the blood of Christ* is a deliverance adequate and full from the guilt and all the consequences of sin, temporal, spiritual, eternal. "The gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."⁹

And let your works justify your faith, and prove it to be living and saving, (as St. James teaches, in the cases of Abraham and Rahab,) and not a mere dead, historical, presumptuous notion, which neither justifies nor saves.

As the doctrine of Justification is now the turning-point in the Tractarian system, as it was in that of the Council of Trent, I add a few remarks.

1. The old scriptural doctrine of justification by faith, or our being accounted and dealt with as righteous before God by faith in the meritorious obedience unto death of Jesus Christ, and not for our own works or deservings, was generally maintained, up to the twelfth century, by the greatest authorities in the church, amidst all the corruptions and idolatries which prevailed; and Mr. Faber, in his learned work,* cites the Fathers from Clement of Rome, A. D. 70, to Bernard of Clairvaux, A. D. 1130, in proof of this.

In the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, however, sprang up the scho-

⁹ Rom. vi. 23.

* The Rev. George Stanley Faber on Justification.

lastic divines, who founded their theology on an unsound alliance of faith and reason, after the philosophical system of Aristotle. Of these the greatest were Peter Lombard, or the Master of the Sentences, in the twelfth century; and Thomas Aquinas, the Angelic Doctor, in the thirteenth. These, Mr. Faber thinks, were the first who asserted broadly the erroneous and dangerous doctrine of justification by infused or inherent righteousness, which the Council of Trent, after two or more centuries, reduced to systematic order, and imposed on the Romish church; and which accordingly Luther and the noble army of martyrs and confessors at the time of the Reformation chiefly opposed, as the grand fundamental error of the popish system. This error the Tract-writers have now revived, and are attempting to lay it as the sandy foundation upon which all their theology may repose.

2. It is therefore to me, I confess, a matter of regret, that in so many of the able and conclusive replies, as far as they proceed, which have appeared to the Tractarian writings, the reference to the grand doctrine of Justification is either so slight, or is altogether omitted; instead of being viewed, as it unquestionably was by all parties at the period of the Reformation, as the turning-point in the whole question.

Never, never shall we see our Protestant Reformed church tranquil and prosperous, and the gross errors of Tractarianism left, as they ought to be, to those who in heart belong to Rome—a very small number as I firmly believe—until we begin at the beginning, by asserting that our pardon, justification, and acceptance with God rest, from first to last, on the merits and righteousness of Christ, and that good works are “the fruits of faith and follow after justification.”

There is no other sacrifice, no other atonement, no other expiation for sin but Christ's, and therefore no other way of pardon and justification. To remove the ground of all these from this only sure foundation, and transfer them in part to the slippery footing of human merits and an inherent righteousness, is to overturn, by implication, the whole of the Gospel, to destroy the comfort of the penitent soul, to dishonour and obscure the work of Christ, to nourish pride and self-righteousness, and to open the door, as in the Church of Rome, to human inventions in the way of satisfaction to Almighty God, superstitions, will-worship, voluntary humility, worship of angels, intercessions of saints, prayers for the dead, purgatory, supererogatory merit, &c. For these and such like errors inevitably “grow out of the mere effort of the troubled conscience, to supply the awful uncertainty arising from a scheme of justification, which knows nothing better for righteousness than our own works and personal holiness. Hence the whole retinue of vain devices for the making of a righteousness of our own, and easing the conscience with nostrums of man's quackery, by which the Church of Rome has been for so many centuries defiled and degraded.” *

* Bishop M'Ilvaine of Ohio, p. 88.

3. I must confess for myself that after reading with all the attention in my power, Mr. Newman's Lectures on Justification, I consider them as the greatest insult—not intentionally, of course, but in fact, the greatest insult ever offered to our church and the whole body of our Reformers, by any divine of talent and reputation for orthodoxy, since the sixteenth century.

The very question which he proposes for discussion is unworthy of a Protestant theologian, "Whether Christians are or are not justified by observance of the moral law."* His main position, "That justification and sanctification are substantially the same thing," is enough to excite the pity of any one acquainted with the doctrine of St. Paul; and when he tells us that "issue is joined on the following question, whether justification means in Scripture, counting us righteous, or making us righteous," any student of the New Testament would blush that a divine of the nineteenth century should hesitate on such a topic.

I quite agree with the eminent American prelate above referred to, when he says, that the fundamental distinction between the righteousness of justification which is external and imputed, and the righteousness of sanctification which is internal and infused by the Holy Spirit, is the key to all the labyrinth of Tractarianism, as it is to all the austerities of Romanism.

4. The primary error of Dr. Pusey and Mr. Newman, is the imposing of a new and unscriptural sense on the word justification, without necessity, without support or colour of support from Scripture, and with no authority but the traditionary opinions of the schoolmen and the Council of Trent, and the lust of novelty in themselves.

And what makes the error more insidious is, that our authors first admit, in words, something of the scriptural meaning of the term in what they call its primary sense; and then coin another totally inconsistent, which they covertly substitute for it."†

5. We boldly maintain that there is but one sense of the word justification when used in Scripture, on the question of man's acceptance with God—and this sense derived from what obtains in the ordinary affairs of human tribunals, and from the constant use of it in Scripture on such occasions.

i. "If there be a controversy between men, and they come unto judgment, that the judge may judge them; they then shall justify the righteous and condemn the wicked."¹⁰

"He that justifieth the wicked and he that condemneth the just, even they both are an abomination to the Lord."¹¹

* pp. 66, 67.

† Bishop O'Brien of Ossory, acutely remarks, that as the Bible [says we "are justified by faith without works;" and our church, "that we are justified by faith only," the terms must be received; and the only course to be pursued by those who oppose the doctrine, is to give another meaning to works, or to faith, or to justification.

ii. "The sense is here clear. It signifies a man's being accounted or declared before a judge not guilty of the faults which he is charged with, but in that respect a just and righteous person, and that, too, in opposition to condemnation.

This is our first grand point in the interpretation of Scripture, to obtain a sound undoubted meaning of the word in a clear case. We then go on to other passages to confirm our meaning. Thus, when Job says, "If I justify myself, my own mouth shall condemn me;"¹² the sense of the word stands.

iii. And when David humbly implores, "Enter not into judgment with thy servant, for in thy sight shall no man living be justified"¹³—the sense remains: it is a forensic term, having regard to a judicial sentence.

So in the 51st Psalm, referring to the Almighty Himself, "That thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest;"¹⁴ or art judged.

iv. We come to the New Testament, and read, "I know nothing by myself, yet am not I hereby justified, but he that judgeth me is the Lord;"¹⁵ the meaning is the same.† So "wisdom is justified of her children;"¹⁶ and our Lord, "God manifest in the flesh," was, after his ascension, "justified," cleared from all charge, by the miraculous gifts of "the Spirit."¹⁷

Let us come to the decisive texts on this question, those which treat of man's pardon before the tribunal of God: "Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth, who is he that condemneth?"¹⁸ the sense of the word stands—there is no appearance of its being used in any but its accustomed meaning. Again, "That he might be just, and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus."¹⁹ "Therefore as by the offence of one, judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one, the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life. For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous."²⁰

If the meaning of a term can be settled, surely this is; as indeed our authors are compelled in some measure to acknowledge, before they frame their evasion of it.

The sense of the word is thus unequivocal. It imports a relative change in the state of an accused person, in respect of the sentence of the divine law.

It implies an accusation, a trial, an acquittal, and a restoration to the reward of a righteous person.

6. *The full doctrine of our justification is thus gathered from these and other passages of Scripture, where it or similar words, as righteousness, pardon, forgiveness, remission, reconciliation occur.*

12) Job ix. 20.

13) Ps. cxliii. 2.

14) P's. li. 4.

15) 1 Cor. iv. 4.

16) Matt. xi. 19.

17) 1 Tim. iii. 16.

18) Rom. viii. 33, 34.

19) Rom. iii. 26.

20) Rom. v. 18, 19.

i. From these we learn that justification is an act of God's mercy, accounting and dealing with the penitent believer as with a righteous person, on account of the obedience and suffering of Jesus Christ; and not only not condemning him at his tribunal, nor imputing his trespasses to him, but imputing or reckoning righteousness without works and treating him accordingly. Such is the plain import of Holy Scripture.

ii. *The meritorious ground* of this justification is the redemption of Christ Jesus, and that only—"the redemption of his blood;" the obedience and suffering of our one Mediator, High Priest, Advocate with the Father.

"He bare our sins in his own body on the tree."²¹ "He was made" (accounted, reckoned) "sin for us who knew no sin, that we might be made" (accounted, reckoned) "the righteousness of God in him."²² "The Lord laid upon him the iniquity of us all."²³

iii. *The instrumental cause of justification*, that which brings man into contact with the promise of pardon in Christ Jesus, is faith, which simply receives, as the testimony of God, the word of promise, and relies on it for pardon, acceptance, and eternal life.

The same principle of faith, indeed, receives all the testimony of God in Scripture as infallibly true, and uses it to its appropriate end; but it justifies as it relies on the promises of pardon in Christ Jesus. Thus it forms the connecting link between the penitent sinner's heart and the Divine promise. Thus it is as the eye of the wounded Israelite looking to the brazen serpent, or the foot of the man-slayer hastening to the city of refuge, or as Noah entering the ark, or the criminal laying hold on the horns of the altar: it is the means of communication, the instrumental cause.

iv. The effects and fruits of this blessed principle are good works; and if it do not produce these, it is dead and can neither justify nor save: and thus St. James's doctrine and St. Paul's are in perfect harmony; the one treating of the direct nature of justification before God in its simplest view; the other of the demonstration of the sincerity of our faith and the truth of that justification in works before men; but these good works, being full of imperfection, cannot stand the severity of the divine judgment, nor be the ground of our acceptance with God, though still indispensably necessary as the fruits and evidences of a lively faith.

v. All this is confirmed by the Scripture expressly opposing justification by faith, to justification by our own works. "Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law."²⁴ "Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law; for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified."²⁵ "Now to him that worketh is the reward, not reckoned of grace, but of debt; but to

21) 1 Pet. ii. 24.

22) 2 Cor. v. 21.

23) Isa. liii. 3.

24) Rom. iii. 28.

25) Gal. ii. 16.

him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness."²⁶

vi. In short, as the learned and profound Bishop O'Brien observes, justification by faith is presented to us in the Bible, with pains in some degree foreign to its general plan and tone of instruction, in every variety of form, and may, therefore, be supported by every kind of evidence. It is asserted; it is assumed; it is defended; it is explained; formal statements are made of it in forms the most explicit, often rendered stronger by distinct negations of the opposite; incidental mention is made of it in a way that shows it was familiar to those whom the writer addresses, as well as to himself; it is supported by reasoning as well as by authority; objections are anticipated to which it is liable, but which are inapplicable to any doctrine opposed to it. It seems, indeed, impossible for caprice to demand any kind of evidence, direct or indirect, which we cannot abundantly supply. *

7. This blessed doctrine, then, of justification by faith is not to be explained away by being confounded with the sanctification which is the produce of the grace of the Holy Spirit within us, nor with the notion of a concrete faith justifying us, or faith and works combined, or faith implying and including works, which are all forms of self-righteousness.

On these errors it is not necessary for me to dwell, as the capital and absorbing invention now, is, justification through an inherent and infused righteousness.

8. There is, indeed, an infused righteousness, as well as an imputed one. There is a righteousness of sanctification, as well as a righteousness of justification: the two gifts are contemporaneous, and can never be separated the one from the other in the true penitent. The same God, who accounts him righteous before His bar for the only merits of Christ which are without him, begins at the same time to make him holy also by His blessed Spirit within him.

But the two blessings differ in various respects, the one from the other. The one blessing is imputed, the other imparted: the one is external, the other internal; the one bestowed and reckoned as to its benefits merely, the other infused and inherent as to its actual nature and properties; the one producing a change in the state of a sinner, the other in the dispositions and habits of his heart and conduct; the one perfect and entire at once, the other gradual and always imperfect in this world; the one entitling him to the inheritance of heaven, the other fitting him for that inheritance.

9. The great vital doctrine of our justification stands out in our articles and homilies in all its glory; after having been for eleven or twelve

* Sermons on Faith, p. 89.

26) Rom. iv. 4

centuries obscured, misunderstood, imperfectly enforced, neglected by too many of the Romish doctors amid the ignorance and superstitions of the dark ages; but maintained substantially and never formally impugned or denied by the chief fathers and ecclesiastical writers till the days of Aquinas. He began the change, by imposing a new meaning on the term justification, by which method of course anything almost may be proved. He first held that what he calls justifying grace is something real and positive in the soul, a certain supernatural quality; and that the Holy Spirit indwelling is the formal cause of justification.

Here was the fatal error; still it was not completed, and, as it were, rounded off, till the Council of Trent. They confirmed and settled the corrupt doctrine. Justification, according to them, is not merely the remission of sins, but also sanctification, and renewal of the inward man by his voluntary reception of grace and gifts: the formal cause is God's justice—not that by which he himself is just, but that by which He makes us just—and we are not only reputed, but are made truly just; and through righteousness inherent in us, are justified.

Here then is the self justifying scheme developed. When any ask what that is which we are to interpose between the anger of God and our sins, so that on account thereof we may be absolved from condemnation and received to everlasting life, St. Paul's answer was henceforth explained away, and the schoolmen and Trent gave their own. They evaded the apostolical doctrine by admitting that justification is remission of sins, and then subverted it by maintaining that it is not merely the remission of sins, but also the sanctification of the inner man; and that the formal cause of justification is that righteousness given to us of God, by which we are renewed in the spirit of our mind and are not only reputed, but are made truly righteous. This righteousness in us, they say, is charity inherent in us, and thus men can satisfy the divine law, according to the state of this life, by their works which are performed in God, and that in their own times they may truly merit the attainment of eternal life.

This was the grand controlling question between the Romanists and the Reformers at the glorious period of the Reformation—"whether," as Archbishop Usher himself puts it, "there be any justification besides sanctification, that is, whether there be any justification at all."*

Or as Hooker expresses it, "The grand question that lieth in controversy between us and Rome, is about the matter of justifying righteousness. This is the mystery of the man of sin, that they make the essence of justification a divine quality inherent: they make it a righteousness which is in us. If it be in us, then it is ours, as our souls are ours, though we have them from God and can hold them no longer than he pleaseth. The Church of Rome," adds Hooker, "in teaching justification by inherent grace doth pervert the truth of Christ"—"Concerning the righteousness of sanctification," he proceeds, "we deny it not to be inherent; only

* M'Ilvaine, p. 144.

we distinguish it as a thing different in nature from the righteousness of justification."

10. Into this mystery of the man of sin we are now again, for the first time since the Reformation, openly plunged, and in a manner so remarkable, as to be quite unparalleled in our Protestant Church. Every point of the Council of Trent is reproduced, with only just those distinctions without a difference, which the position of our divines so long as they choose to continue in the church, settled by Cranmer, Ridley, Jewel, and Hooker, imposes.

Thus our authors write, "to justify, means counting righteous, but includes under its meaning making righteous."*

"It is a pronouncing holy, while it proceeds to make holy."†

"Almighty God creates the soul (in justification) by the breath of his mouth, by the sacrament of his voice."

"It is making us righteous by a righteousness inherent, wrought in us by grace flowing from Christ's atonement."‡

"Cleanliness of heart and spirit, obedience by word and deed, this alone can constitute our justification. The gift of righteousness is not an imputation, but an inward work."§

"The love of Christ abiding in us is imputed to us for justification."||

"The righteousness wherein we must stand at the last day is not Christ, our imputed obedience, but our good works."

"Justification consists in God's inward presence." "It is the act of God imparting his divine presence to the soul through baptism, and so making us the temples of the Holy Ghost."¶

"It is the habitation of God the Father, and the Word incarnate, through the Holy Ghost."**

"Christ is our righteousness, by dwelling in us by his Spirit: he justifies by entering into us: he continues to justify us by remaining in us."††

"This is the glorious Shekinah of the Word incarnate, the true wedding garment in which the soul must be dressed."

11. But I need not trouble my readers with more extracts: the substantial disagreement of these divines with holy Scripture, and our Articles, and their substantial agreement with the worst errors of the Church of Rome, are as clear as the day. To speak of their disagreement with our Articles, indeed, after the incredible sophistry, and, I must say, dishonesty of Tract No. 90, would be useless.

Give me the principles of interpretation by which justification is thus, as by a magic wand, enchanted away, and I will prove or disprove anything. Let me apply such a process to any other grand Scripture terms, as Repentance, Sanctification, Glorification, Faith, Law, and I will disprove all the doctrines of the Gospel.

* M'Ilvaine, p. 70.

§ p. 34, 39.

** p. 47.

† p. 79, 80.

|| p. 18.

†† p. 51.

‡ p. 67.

¶ Pusey, to the Bishop of Oxford, p. 42.

Nay, give me these principles—I speak it with awe—and I will defend the Arian, the Socinian, the Antinomian, the Neological, the Rationalist Heresies, to say nothing of the less obvious and gross ones of the Eutychians, Nestorians, Macedonians, and others. I assert boldly that all these heresies, gross or refined, spring from nothing but a misinterpretation, apparently minute at first, of Holy Scripture.

12. I may apply here, with Bishop M'Ilvaine, what the Tracts themselves on another occasion admit: "In all doctrinal discussions, the undeveloped germs of many diversities of practice and moral character lie thick together and in small compass, and as if promiscuously and without essential differences. The highest truths differ from the most miserable delusions, by what appears to be a few words or letters."*

13. The prelate to whom I have already referred, well observes, "That to set about fabricating forms of expression that shall baffle the pernicious ingenuity with which men continue to evade the natural force of language which they do not like, betrays an ignorance alike of the imperfection of human language, and of the wiles of the human heart. The whole history of legislation shows sufficiently that no specification, however curiously formed, can anticipate a tithe of the subtleties with which men are supplied when they search for them for such objects. And the Bible does not make the attempt."†

14. What completes the unscriptural and most dangerous system of our divines is, that when they have established, as they think, their doctrine of justification by infused righteousness, they go on, as the Romanists before them, to assert that this justification is conveyed by baptism. The importance, dignity, and grace of this blessed and holy sacrament we most strongly maintain, and the right of the children of the faithful to its privileges we unequivocally and constantly defend. But perhaps the most extraordinary of all the strange and dangerous perversions of the plain meaning of Scripture, and of our Articles on Justification and on the Sacrament, is this. What, is justification by faith only before the tribunal of God with respect to the sentence of the divine law and in opposition to works, to be reduced to a participation, by the unconscious infant, of the outward privileges and incipient grace of the initiatory sacrament of baptism! This is too gross to be dwelt on for an instant. Our Article xi. must then be changed, and instead of the words as they have stood for three centuries, "We be justified by faith only," we must read, forsooth, "We be justified by baptism!" This is an opiate to the conscience indeed! And yet this is only one of the frightful consequences flowing from our Tract-writers' main doctrine of justification by infused and inherent righteousness.

15. The reason why the grand scriptural doctrine of our justification

* Oxford Tracts, No. 79.

† Sermons on Faith, p. 90.

is so much controverted is, that man is prone to self-righteousness and a reliance on his own doings. And his blindness is such that he does not, till enlightened by grace, discern the immense difference which exists between the righteousness of Christ as the ground of acceptance, and an infused and inherent and imperfect one of our own.

But when the student begins, with a penitent heart, in earnest to seek his own salvation and that of others, that he may guide souls in the ways of peace and holiness, he gradually discovers the root of the whole question to lie here, What is the matter of our justifying righteousness?

16. Let us, then, understand and preach still the pure and old-fashioned Gospel of Christ. Whilst the politician opposes Romish error on the grounds of the claim of supremacy and infallibility, and the assumed jurisdiction of a foreign ecclesiastical power—and just grounds they are—let us go to the bottom of the matter, the Scripture doctrine of our pardon and justification denied.

Whilst others resist the idle pretences of unity, universality, and antiquity, let us expose the ground of all these evils, the sandy foundation of man's self-justifying merit.

Whilst some rejoice in the triumphs of the Reformation as sweeping away indulgences, saint-worship, prayers for the dead, purgatory, ceremonies, penances, priestly absolutions, tyranny over the conscience—and grounds of joy they are—let us keep our eyes on the soil in which all these things were nourished.

Whilst others rejoice—as they well may—in the full exposure of the *opus operatum*, and masses, and the seven sacraments, and the denial of the cup to the laity, and prayers in an unknown tongue, and the celibacy of the clergy, let us rejoice in the vindication of that capital truth which makes such errors impossible.

Nay, whilst others, still going further than these, yet stop short of the real point at issue in the triumph of the Reformation, let us draw from the real fountain of joy, the justification of a sinner replaced on the only sure foundation, the righteousness of the Lord Christ.

And from this grand truth restored, let us go to the immediate causes of the entire Reformation, the holy Scriptures vindicated as the only divine rule of faith and practice, and the right and duty of responsible creatures to search for themselves with humble faith those sacred records, instead of blindly submitting to human tradition, and the pretended authority and council of the fathers and the church.

When we see our way, we shall be better able to appreciate the three great subordinate blessings obtained by that most important and vital restoration of Scriptural religion.

17. It is not necessary, indeed, frequently to enter theologically into the whole question of justification in our popular instructions; but, virtually, it must form a part of all our discourses public and private—and

from time to time a full and systematic exposition of the great doctrine, with its connexion with other doctrines of the Gospel should be given, and its bearings on practice and the cultivation of holy and scriptural affections pointed out, as in the Epistles to the Romans and Corinthians.

Whenever, indeed, we dwell on Jesus Christ and Him crucified, we must preach justification; whenever we open the mystery of redemption through His blood, we must do the same. Whenever we invite and urge sinners to turn to God, and propose His mercy in Christ Jesus as the attractive motive, we can only adopt a like course. Whenever we raise the drooping penitent with the assurance of the divine acceptance, we have no other topic to present. Whenever we guard against superstitions, will-worship, and mediation of saints and angels, we use the same conclusive arguments.

In fact, the whole of sound theology, whether systematic or popular, is impregnated with the one capital doctrine, that "we are accounted righteous before God, only for the merits of our Lord Jesus Christ by faith, and not for our own works and deservings."

18. Over statements should, of course, be avoided on this great topic, as on every other: enthusiastic, hasty, inadequate views are always ineffective, and often dangerous. This is not the only doctrine of the Gospel. There are many others—many to prepare for it—many to accompany it—many to follow it. There is also the whole system of Christian Duties and Morals to be enforced. The nearer we can keep to the exact proportion and bearing of inspired Scripture on this, as on all other subjects of religion, the better. As to justification, therefore, the way in which the apostles state the doctrine—the occasion—the persons addressed—the consequences deduced—the frequency—are all to be carefully examined and accurately followed.

19. To assert, for instance, the doctrine of justification by faith, without clearly showing, as the Scriptures do, that it is to the penitent who is sincerely striving to turn to God, that you address yourself; or without showing that it is with a lively faith that it is to be received; or without showing that faith, though, as it respects Christ, it relies alone on his merits, yet is in other views the principle of all good works; or without showing that justification is the motive to all those good works, by which, indeed, a living may be distinguished from a dead faith, as certainly as a tree is discerned by its fruits—if we assert justification without these explications, we undoubtedly inculcate a most unscriptural dogma, and not the Gospel of Christ—we fall, in fact, into the awful gulf of Antinomianism, whether intentionally or not.

20. But the scriptural doctrine of justification itself, duly and in its proper place and time set before the broken-hearted penitent, as the ground of his acceptance before God, to be received by a lively, humble, affec-

tionate faith, and followed by the works of sanctification as its necessary fruit, is a "true and wholesome doctrine, and very full of comfort," contributing equally to the glory of God, the consolation of the penitent, and the interests of holiness.*

LECTURE VII.

GLORY OF CHRIST IN HIS DIVINE AND MEDIATORIAL CHARACTER.

COL. i. 15—17.

THE apostle, in the passage we have lately considered, verses 12—14, closed the account of the distinguishing benefits of Christ's salvation, by stating that we have *redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins*.

Lest, however, the Colossians should doubt the full efficacy of Christ's blood for this end, unless "will-worship" and the mediation of "angels" were added, he proceeds in the verses before us to give the most sublime descriptions of the glory of Christ in his divine and mediatorial character which is to be found in any part of Scripture, in order to show them the infinite merit of his one sacrifice upon the cross, and the vanity of all pretended additions to it.

The apostle speaks, first, of Christ in his divine nature; and, then, in his works of creation and providence, in proof of it: and, lastly, as Mediator to the church, founded on both.

14. *Who is the image of the invisible God, the first-born of every creature.*

1. Thus the apostle describes our Lord's divine nature in itself, of which some rays of glory burst forth in his incarnation—for St. Paul seems to have an eye both to what our Lord is in himself, and what he became to us.

* The substance of this note, except where additions have been made, appeared in an appendix to my charge of 1842-3.

He is in himself *the image*, the representation, the exact resemblance of *the invisible God*; and being such, he manifested and declared him to men. He is *the first-born of—*born before—*every creature*, or the first-born of the whole creation by an eternal generation, and “appointed” as such, “heir of all things;”¹ as the first-born of his father was under the Jewish law.

The word *image* is used in two senses in Scripture, as it is still in our ordinary language. It sometimes means any resemblance, slight or not, of another person or thing, according to the nature of the subject spoken of. So Adam was created “in the image of God,” not as fully resembling God, but as bearing some faint likeness to him in “righteousness and true holiness.”

In a yet slighter sense, “the man” is said to be “the image and glory of God,” on account of the woman’s conjugal subjection to him. And so our Lord’s question to the Jews with regard to the money current in Judea, “Whose image and superscription is this?” referred to the very imperfect resemblance to Cæsar impressed upon the coin. And in contradistinction to this, the apostle contrasts the word, in a higher and stricter sense, with these slight adumbrations, when he says that the “law had a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things.”²

In this order and strict sense we speak of a son being the image of his father, and a royal prince of the king whom he is to succeed. In these cases, we perfectly understand that, not a faint likeness merely, but one involving the very nature and qualities of the father, all the fullness of being, a soul, a body, a life, faculties, all the counterpart of his father is intended. And so the royal prince succeeding to his father’s throne, as Solomon to David’s. Thus, “Adam begat Seth in his own likeness, after his image,”³ that is, Seth had a nature precisely the same in all things as Adam.*

* Daillé in loc.

1) Heb. i. 2.

2) Heb. vi. 1.

3) Gen. v. 2.

When our Lord, then, is called here *the image of God*, we must gather the meaning from the nature of our Lord, who is the subject of the description, the manner in which the words are introduced, and the kind of proofs, if there be any, adduced by the sacred writer to support his argument.

As Christ, then, is the consubstantial, natural, and co-equal Son of God, and has the same nature, the same qualities, perfections, and power, so that “whatsoever we believe of the glory of the Father, that we believe of the Son, without any difference or inequality ;” and as the words are introduced to prove the infinite virtue of his sacrifice on the cross ; and as the context ascribes to him all the divine prerogatives of creative and conserving power, in proof of his being what the words, *image of God and the first-born of every creature*, import, we can have no difficulty in understanding the passage. It teaches us that Christ the uncreated Word and Wisdom of the Father, is his perfect image and resemblance, his exact counterpart ; possessing all his glory, attributes, perfections, and powers, as the natural and only-begotten Son of God.

Thus our apostle speaks in another place of “Satan’s blinding the minds of men, lest the light of the glorious Gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them”—“and give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face”—the person—“of Jesus Christ.”⁴ The meaning of the word is clear—Christ is in the highest and strictest sense *the image of God*.

And again, speaking of our Lord, our apostle declares yet more expressly, that he is “the brightness of his Father’s glory, and the express image of his person,”⁵ which needs not a single word of comment.

And thus again we read of the eternal Son and Word, that “being in the form of God,” that is, having his entire nature and image, and being surrounded with all the glory and majesty attendant on it, (as appears from the corres-

4) 2 Cor. iv. 4. 6.

5) Heb. i. 3

ponding clause, "the form of a servant," which unquestionably means the entire image and nature of man, with all its attendant weaknesses and infirmities,) "he thought it not robbery,"—but knew it to be his full, natural, and unalienable right,—“to be equal with God.”⁶ Thus is Christ in his divine nature, *the image of the invisible God*.

In like manner, he is in the amplest and most transcendent import of the terms, *the first-born*—not first created—but *first-born of every creature*—born before every creature—born before the whole creation—begotten of the Father by an eternal generation, as the Son of his love, “antedecently to any other emanations: before any thing proceeded from him, or was framed or created by him,” as Bishop Pearson admirably speaks; “being that eternal Son,” says Bishop Hall, “who had his being of and with the Father before any creature was made.”

The phrase was familiar, it is said, to the Jews. They applied it to the supreme, self-existent Jehovah, in order to denote his pre-existence, and point him out as the cause of all things—their term was, “The first-born of the world.” And the apostle employs it in a like transcendent sense, as the proofs which he subjoins demonstrate. Christ is the first-born of the whole creation, as begotten of the Father before the world was.

Of this absolute Deity and glory of Christ, *as the image of God and the first-born of every creature*, some rays burst forth under the veil of his humanity. This we learn from many passages. “No man hath seen God at any time,” saith St. John, “the only-begotten Son that is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.”⁷ Other expressions agree with this. “God was manifest,” made known, “in the flesh;”⁸ “In him,” Christ incarnate, “dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily;”⁹ “He that hath seen me,” said our Lord, “hath seen the Father.”¹⁰ All these texts imply that some reflex glory of Christ, in his divine nature

6) Phil. iii. 7) John i. 18. 8) 1 Tim. iii. 16. 9) Col. iii. 4. 10) John xiv. 9.

as the image of God, shone forth when he was on earth, which represented to us, as in a mirror, whatever we were capable of knowing, or needed to know, of *the invisible God*.

For there is an emphasis in the word *invisible*. Our Lord is not here said simply to be *the image of God*, but *the image of the invisible God*, which from the proofs immediately added, seems to imply that "the King eternal, immortal, invisible, who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto, whom no man hath seen, nor can see," hath made himself visible to us, in some faint degree, in his only-begotten Son, tabernacling in the flesh, and displaying all divine perfections, and performing all divine operations in the human nature.

Accordingly, all the appearances of the divine Being to the patriarchs in the earlier history of the Old Testament, were, as we have reason to believe, in the person of his eternal Word or Wisdom, thus giving some preludes of his incarnation. And thus the beloved apostle expressly, "The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth."¹¹

And it is this relation to us, as affecting practically our salvation, which the apostle has in view, in all that he says of the absolute glory of our Lord's divinity from eternity, on which it rests.

The correctness of this interpretation appears to demonstration by the proofs which the apostle immediately adduces.

16. *For by him were all things created that are in heaven and in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers; all things were created by him and for him.*

17. *And he is before all things, and by him all things consist.*

2. The word of connexion, *for*, gives to these verses the force of direct reasons or proofs of preceding assertions.

¹¹ John i. 14.

Christ is, in truth, “the image of the invisible God, and the first-born of every creature,” both in himself, and also, in a measure, to us, so far as our salvation was concerned, *for*—because, on this account. And then St. Paul describes the proofs, which are four: 1st, He was the Creator of all things; 2nd, He was their final end; 3rd, He existed always before them; and 4th, He preserves them in being every moment.

1. He was the Creator of all things. This the apostle first delivers in the common and general phrase of Moses, *For by him were all things created that are in heaven and in earth*; showing that he speaks of the same creation.

Next, by a division which Moses did not use, as he confined himself to the production of corporeal substances. *Lest*, therefore, those immaterial beings, whom the Colossians were in danger of worshipping, should seem exempted from the Son’s creation if they were not expressly mentioned, he adds, *Visible and invisible*.

Then, lest, again, in that invisible world, amongst the many degrees of celestial hierarchies, any order might seem exempted from an essential dependence on the Son; and so might let in the errors of the false teachers, he names those of the greatest eminence, *Whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers*.

2. Nor doth this suffice to extend thus the objects of his power, except it be so understood as to acknowledge the sovereignty of his person and the authority of his actions. For lest we should suppose the Son of God to have framed the world as a mere instrumental cause, which works by and for another, he declares him to be the final as well as efficient cause, *for all things were created by him and for him*.*

3. Further, that nothing may be left for cavil, the apostle asserts that Christ existed before any thing was cre-

* Bishop Pearson.

ated, that he was prior to all creation, to all being, in the visible or invisible world—that he was the first-born, as he had said, of the whole creation; born before every creature. This he conveys in the emphatic words which follow, *And he is before all things.*”

4. Lastly; whereas all things receive their being by creation, and when they have received it, continue in the same by God’s conservation; lest in any thing we should be thought not to depend immediately on the Son, he is described as the Conservator, as well as the final end of all things. *And by him all things consist.**

Supposing, then, we were to consider these two verses by themselves, it could not be denied that they contain a most complete description of the Creator of the world, and that, if they had been spoken of God the Father, they would have been in no way injurious to his Majesty, who is nowhere more plainly set forth to us as the Maker of the world.† If this be so, which cannot be doubted, then being spoken, as they are, of the Son, they prove indisputably his divine creative attributes and power; and that therefore he is, in himself and to us, what the apostle undertook to prove, “the image of the invisible God, the first-born of every creature.”

3. The apostle proceeds, in the next verses, the 18th and 19th, to state the relation of Christ to the church as Mediator, founded on the preceding assertions and proofs.

The transition is marked, and full of instruction, as we shall see in the next lecture.

The mere abstract declaration of our Lord’s divine glory and power would not have answered the apostle’s purpose as respected the redemption of men, or the suppression of the particular errors of the Colossians. Nor would the implied manifestation, generally, of all this glory in his incarnation, have sufficed.

The apostle comes down, therefore, from the sublimity of

* Bishop Pearson.

† Ib.

our Lord's self-existence, his possession of all divine attributes, his eternal generation, his all-creative energy, and his conservation of the universe, to the express mediatorial office of Christ in human nature as the proper reason why he had entered on the description of his original glory; since his mediatorial undertaking rested upon it, derived its infinite virtue from it, and was incapable of being exercised and accomplished without it.

A similar transition is observable in the commencement of the Epistle to the Hebrews, where all the topics are so much the same as in the verses under consideration, as to illustrate the apostle's meaning in both.

In the passage before us, Christ is said to be the "image of the invisible God." In the Epistle to the Hebrews, "The brightness of his Father's glory and the express image of his person."

Here, "the first-born," and as such, the Lord "of every creature;" there, "the Heir of all things."

Here, *all things were created by him*; there, He "made the worlds."

Here, *By him all things consist*; there, "He upholds all things by the word of his power."

Thus far the steps in our Lord's divine glory in himself, and in the works of creation and providence, are parallel in the two epistles.

The transition, also, to his office as Mediator is precisely similar in both. In Hebrews it is thus expressed: "When he had by himself purged our sins, he for ever sat down at the right-hand of God."¹² Here, with the same meaning, but adapted to the apostle's design, "He is the head of the body, the church," &c. This parallelism renders the interpretation of the passages in the two epistles more clear and conspicuous.

There is a similar transition in a passage of our apostle, to which we have already in part adverted, to the Philippian

¹² Heb. i. 1-3.

church ; a most instructive description of our Lord's humiliation being interposed. "Who being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God." There is our Lord's original Deity. "But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant." His voluntary susception of our nature is here described: "And being found in fashion as a man, He humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." Here is the further abasement of Christ to a lower degree of voluntary humiliation still ; till he reached its utmost point, the death of the cross.

The important and marked transition next follows, as in our Epistle and in that to the Hebrews, varied according to the apostle's argument.

"Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth."¹³

Here the mediatorial glory of Christ in his exaltation is described as following upon his divine and original glory, and his voluntary assumption of our nature and suffering for us ; and being the promised reward and consequence of that humiliation.

Indeed, the three states of our blessed Lord—his original glory as equal with the Father—his humiliation and sufferings as made man for our sakes—his exaltation afterwards as the God-man and "Head over all things to his church," are nowhere more clearly set forth than in this sublime passage.*

Christians, awake ; behold with the eye of faith the majestic object presented to you ! Take in all the glory of our Lord Christ ; imbibe it ; let it fill your souls !

Adore in silent faith this overwhelming discovery of his

* Bishop Sherlock on Phil. ii. 6—10.

13) Phil. ii. 6—10.

person and offices. Worship and magnify him for ever. Repose for everlasting salvation on his infinite sacrifice alone.

All our Lord's acts as Mediator are done by the God-man, and could be performed by no other : and, being accomplished by him, are the complete and adequate ground of our trust and reliance. Be well assured that "the gates of hell" can never prevail against him, who, being "the image of the invisible God," is become our Saviour, Redeemer, Intercessor, Lord, All, and in all.

And forget not, careless sinner, that those who despise or neglect the offers of his "so great salvation,"¹⁴ can never escape from his tremendous wrath and fiery indignation.

LECTURE VIII.

CHRIST THE HEAD OF THE CHURCH—HIS PRE-EMINENCE AND FULNESS.

COL. i. 18, 19.

OUR apostle now enters upon the mediatorial office of Christ ; and declares, 1st, that our Lord is Head of the church ; 2nd, the foundations and beginnings of which were laid in his resurrection ; 3rd, that He has the pre-eminence in all things ; 4th, and that *all fulness*, by the counsel and good pleasure of the Father, is laid up in him.

18. *He is the head of the body, the church.*

As the head in the human frame excels in dignity and eminence the members, and is the source of life and influ-

¹⁴ Heb. ii. 3.

ence to them all, and governs and directs their movements, and protects and preserves them; so Christ is the divine Head of his spiritual body, the church, being exalted infinitely in dignity and excellency above his members, and being to each and all of them the source of life and influence; governing and directing them in all their conduct; and protecting and defending them in every emergency.

What is meant by his church it will be necessary for us to consider for a moment, from the controversies raised on the subject.

The name of church (*ἐκκλησία*) is considered to be derived from a word signifying to call out, *ἐκκαλέω*. It is a company or multitude of persons "called out" and gathered from others. And, in the case of the Christian church, it is a congregation or body of men "called out" by the influences of the Holy Ghost, under the ministry of the Word, from a state of natural ignorance, misery, guilt, and alienation from God, into a state of penitence, pardon, reconciliation, adoption, union with Christ, acceptance, and progressive holiness.

This is the church of Christ. It is composed, in other words, of all those who are "delivered from the power of darkness," (as we have lately shown,) "and translated into the kingdom of God's dear Son; who have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins;" and are gradually being "made meet by the Father for the inheritance of the saints in light."

These are the members of Christ's mystical body; and he is their Head, their Ruler, their Lord; their source of grace, of vital influence, holiness and joy; their entire salvation.

They are the true, spiritual members of Christ, "the called according to God's purpose,"¹ as our apostle speaks, and united to him by a living faith.

This church is either visible or invisible.

1) Rom. viii. 28.

1. The **INVISIBLE** is that which is known certainly to God alone, and to men, by the judgment of charity only, from their adherence to the visible and professed communion of the faithful, and their holy doctrine and walk.

These are scattered all over the earth; they consist of all who are "born of God,"² incorporated into Christ, deriving life and nourishment from him by faith, loving him above all things, and following his holy footsteps.

Such is the mystical or invisible body and church of Christ.

2. The **VISIBLE CHURCH** consists of the whole congregation of faithful men in different parts of the world, who are visibly united in their several countries and places, under lawful ecclesiastical pastors and governors; and amongst whom, as our Reformers admirably express it, "the pure Word of God is preached, and the sacraments be duly administered, according to Christ's ordinance, in all those things which of necessity are requisite to the same.*

Such were the seven churches of Asia; such the churches of Rome, Corinth, Colosse; and such all other visible churches, in every place, and every age of the world. The word is applied in various measures of extent according to circumstances; sometimes stretching to the whole professing body of Christ throughout the world; at other times confined to a national church duly established; and at others contracted to the "church in a house."³

The whole of these form the one holy, apostolic, catholic church of Christ, amongst whom is cultivated, as opportunities are granted, "the communion of saints;"[†] and the unity of which consists in the grand fundamentals of Christianity, as set forth by our apostle; "one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all;"⁴ that is, "one Lord," received and acknowledged in his divine and mediatorial glo-

* Art. xix.

† Apostles' Creed.

2) John i. 13-

3) Rom. xvi. 5.

4) Ephes iv. 5, 6.

ry ; “one faith ” in all the mighty facts and doctrines he has revealed for our salvation ; “one baptism,” as the seal and confirmation of these, with further measures of grace ; the whole scheme of redemption being referred to the love of the “one God and Father of all.”

Differences of details in the expression and application of these fundamental principles by forms of external polity and order, by regulations as to the mode of administering the holy sacraments, and the celebration of public worship, are no breach of the unity of the church. They are peaceably settled, in each division or portion of the undivided church of Christ, by those who have due authority in the same, nor are they made articles of faith, or imposed universally on others.

In our own episcopal church we retain the threefold order of the ministry as of divine appointment ; the use of liturgies ; the power of the church to decree rites and ceremonies, and exercise authority in controversies of faith ; the subjection of all classes of persons, ecclesiastical and civil, to the queen’s majesty, “unto whom the chief government of all estates in the realm doth appertain,”* and to the exclusion of any foreign jurisdiction, with the other details in our incomparable Articles, Homilies, and Liturgy, necessary, in our judgment, to the order and peace of our own particular church.

But there we stop ; we do not go on, with too many in the present day, to condemn other churches, who have thought that the general points essential to good order and discipline might be determined in a manner somewhat different from our own, or who were compelled by circumstances to follow such a different course at the period of the glorious Reformation.

It is the Church of Rome and those who follow her, that go beyond the wise, moderate, and scriptural language of our Reformers ; and who, by the impious claim of exclusive sal-

* Art. xxxvii.

vation, by the imposition of sinful terms of communion, and the placing of unity in the acknowledgment of the iron supremacy of a pretended bishop of the universal church, rob Christ of his mediatorial glory, dethrone Him from his peculiar office and prerogative as the only *head of his body, the church*, and indirectly overthrow every one of the doctrines flowing from his infinite merits and death.

We avoid all this in our own church, so long as we follow her true spirit. We hold to apostolical order, but without bigotry and exclusion. We shun unnecessary separation as involving the guilt of schism, but without claiming dominion over the conscience. We maintain unity, consistency and authority amongst our own people; but without extravagance and presumption. We cultivate all that is really conducive to peace, and holiness, and growth in grace; so as to avoid enthusiasm on the one hand, and superstition on the other. We support our own scriptural, steady, well-balanced system of doctrine and discipline, derived, in our most firm conviction, from the apostolic pattern; and yet we pretend not to make all these matters of the essence of the church; but, on the contrary, "love all those," with whatever defects, as we suppose, in their external government, "who love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity."⁵

18. *Who is the beginning, the first-born from the dead, that in all things he might have the pre-eminence.*

2. Here our apostle proceeds with Christ's mediatorial office and glory. As the "Head of his church," He is the chief, the first cause, and author of every thing, the first principle, the *beginning*; especially by the blessed resurrection, being the *first-born, or Lord, of the dead*, as the first that rose with a human body to immortal life, and as "the first-fruits of them that slept."⁶

Thus He was *the beginning* of the kingdom of God. The church then truly began to be or exist in its last and most

5) Eph. vi. 24.

6) 1 Cor. xv. 25.

spiritual dispensation. Men were converted and made new creatures by his Spirit, with all possible advantages and aids, and in the largest numbers.

3. Accordingly, *in all things He hath the pre-eminence*; as well in the first creation, properly so called, as in the second or new creation, the redemption or restoration of man. Nothing must rise above Him, nothing obscure Him, nothing diminish his glory. To Him the primacy in all things belongs.* Under his rule and government all things are placed. He had the pre-eminence in the natural creation because He framed and produced all things; and so in the spiritual creation, because He is *the beginning, the first-born from the dead*, and Creator of all things new.

Thus the pre-eminence is Christ's in all respects and over all worlds; in creation, providence, redemption, essential dignity, assumed and delegated authority, personal excellency, and the displays of divine Omnipotence.†

19. *For it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell.*

4. To render all he had said more firm and binding, St. Paul adds, that it was so fixed by the express design and counsel of God. All was done for the highest and most perfect of all reasons—the will and good pleasure of God. It was not a secondary or immaterial matter, to be added to by human traditions and inventions; but the result of a fixed and immutable purpose.

In Christ, and Christ alone, is reposed all the fulness of grace, wisdom, righteousness, mercy, power; all the fulness of divine authority to create, redeem, preserve, and raise again from the dead the church, which is his body—“all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.” Whatever God has in himself, that he bestows upon the Son as Mediator, that he may be glorified in him. Christ is to be “all in all” to us. We are “complete in Him;” we need seek no addi-

* Calvin in loc.

† Scott in loc.

tions, no improvements, no alterations. Whoever derogates from Christ, as the false teachers at Colosse, or attempts to lessen his power, to rob him of any part of his mediatorial office, or to take away a drop from his fulness, makes void, so far as in him lies, the eternal counsel of God.

This *pleased the Father*; this was his good pleasure; this his design formed before the ages; this the "eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord;" every thing is centered in Christ according to the emphatic declaration, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." And this fulness *dwells*, remains in Him; abides in Christ; has in Him a permanent residence; reposes eternally there; and is not, as the Shechinah and visible glory of the temple of old, ever to be removed.

What, then, can the humble believer want which is not in Christ? What can be added to his work, who, when He shed his blood as Mediator, was still in his divine nature, the "image of the invisible God," and thus gave an infinite merit to his sacrifice? What can be needed to complete his salvation, who, when he became "Head of the church," in his incarnation, was still "the first-born of every creature" by his eternal generation; and became "the first-born of the dead," also, by breaking the bars of the grave, and opening the kingdom of heaven to all believers? What admixture of the feeble names of the hierarchies of heaven can be made with the exclusive and divine glory of that one "name which is above every name?"⁷ What claims have angels or arch-angels to our trust, when we have a divine Mediator who created all these orders of the invisible world, and sustains them, and is their final end? What have we to do with the worship of saints or angels, when we have the Lord and Creator of angels mediating for us? Why admit the blasphemous claims of the bishop of Rome as the head of the universal church, when we have Christ solemnly asserting that ineffable title to himself?

7) Eph. iii. 11.

8) Phil. ii. 9.

Let us, then, adhere to Christ as the inexhaustible and adequate source of salvation. Let us make him the beginning, the middle, and the end of our faith. Out of him, all is weakness, superstition, and death. In Him, we have every thing for time and eternity.

Let us, therefore, be "strong in faith, giving glory to God"⁹ in Him and by Him. Let us receive with joy every particle of "the record which God hath,"¹⁰ in the verses of this lecture and elsewhere, "given of his Son." Christ will conquer at last. He must "reign till He has put all enemies under his feet."¹¹ *It hath pleased the Father that in Him should all fulness dwell.* Christ, "the image of the invisible God," shall be universally worshipped. "The first-born of every creature" shall have the world given Him as his inheritance. The Creator, Preserver, and Final End of all things, shall be adored by the Jew and Gentile all over the earth. The church, of which Christ is the head, shall be co-extensive with the world of mankind. "The beginning, the first-born from the dead," shall fill with the hopes of a glorious resurrection the now sorrowful creation of God. "In all things," and by all in heaven and earth, "the pre-eminence" shall be given to Him. The pleasure of the Father that *in Him should all fulness dwell*, shall be the delight, and confession, and boast, and triumph of a redeemed race. "His name shall endure for ever; his name shall be continued as long as the sun; and men shall be blessed in Him; all nations shall call Him blessed."¹²

NOTE.—The whole question between genuine Protestantism and the new system of errors leading to Popery, relates to the person and work of Christ.

Let our divines act upon this most decisive passage of St. Paul, which we have been considering in this and the last lecture, and the controversy between us is terminated. But their whole fabric would fall; standing, as it does, on ignorance of Christ.

9) Rom. iv. 20.

10) 1 John v. 11.

11) 1 Cor. xv. 25.

12) Ps. lxxii. 17.

This semi-popish scheme, indeed, forms, in our day, the grand opposition to the sublime doctrine of the divine and mediatorial glory of Christ, as stated by our inspired apostle.

The Pelagian heresy is too barefaced to make much way in our Protestant Evangelical Church.* The Arian and Socinian blasphemies are too profane. The enthusiast is mere vapour. The violent political dissenting partisan betrays his own cause. The open Papist we understand. The profligate and skeptical, under the Christian name, form no distinct body. The worldly, and careless, and self-righteous, are generally within the means of grace still. The quiet, learned Non-conformists are few.

It is the semi-Roman system now again obtruded on our church,† which obscures the glory of Christ by exalting the church, and the priesthood, and the sacraments, and the fathers, and traditions, and what is called catholicity, above Him and beyond Him; and denies the fulness which it hath pleased the Father to repose in Him, by bringing in the merit of works; justification by infused righteousness; transubstantiation;‡ prayers for the dead; the intercession of saints, and a thousand ceremonies which strip Christ, virtually, of all his divine and exalted functions, and transfer them to man's miserable doings.

LECTURE IX.

PEACE, AND RECONCILIATION OF ALL THINGS BY CHRIST.

COL. i. 20.

THE apostle having finished his astonishing description of the glory of our Lord in his divine nature and mediatorial office, verses 15—19, proceeds in the verse before us to press still further the main point of his epistle, the all-sufficiency

* Though it is astonishing how popery in all ages has leaned towards it; as our Tractarians, their followers, also do, in its semi-Pelagian form.

† For the disciples of Archbishop Laud, and the Nonjurors also, went a great way in the same course.

‡ A leading divine of this body does not scruple to maintain, that "the sacramental elements are themselves changed into the body and blood of Christ;" and this in opposition to the Regius Professor of Divinity, Dr. Hampden, who ruled, "That the Church of England teaches that there is no change in the elements apart from their reception by the faithful."

of Christ for man's salvation, by showing that our reconciliation with God, in all the amplitude of that vast benefit, must be sought for in Christ, and Christ only.

In order to this, he notices, 1st, The foundation of this reconciliation in the blood of the cross: and 2nd, The extent of it, reaching to things in heaven and things on earth.

20. *And having made peace through the blood of his cross.*

1. Here is the foundation laid of the reconciliation between God and man.

Peace implies a previous state of warfare; reconciliation a previous state of alienation and separation.

Man by the fall rose up in rebellion against his Creator and Lord, and dared to place himself in opposition to him. The peace which Adam enjoyed in obedience to his Maker and communion with him was thus broken; nor can it be restored, as it should appear, without two things previously taking place, neither of which can man effect—a ground of reconciliation must be laid in a satisfaction made to the violated law and justice of the great moral Governor of the universe; and a disposition must be produced in the rebel to return to his obedience, and seek to be again united to God, the fountain of life. For how can “two walk together unless they are agreed?”—and how can man be restored to happiness in God, unless he be desirous to be reconciled, and willing to accept of the means which God may reveal for that purpose?

God, then, is the sole and primary author of this peace, and has laid a solid foundation for it, by giving his only-begotten Son to be a propitiatory sacrifice for sin; as the prophet foretells, “When he saw that there was no man, and wondered that there was no intercessor, then his arm brought salvation unto him, and his righteousness, it sustained him.”¹

Christ, then, being the Creator, Preserver, and Final End of all things, undertook by his incarnation to become “the

1) Isa. lix. 16.

head of his body the church, and the beginning and first-born from the dead," in order that he might, in his human nature, joined by an ineffable union with his divine, *make peace through the blood of his cross.*

Such is the commencement and bond of our re-union with God. Out of Christ we are miserable, and must remain so, because we are at enmity with the Author of all blessedness.

In Christ a ground is laid for peace, both in the honour done to the justice of God, and in the preparation for the sinner's renouncing his rebellion and seeking to be reconciled to his offended Maker.

What a stupendous view of the work of our Lord and Saviour does this present! Well may he have been foretold as "the Shiloh," the peaceable One, yea, "the Prince of peace." Well may it be said, "Peace is preached by Jesus Christ." Well may our apostle have declared, "We have redemption through his blood." (verse 14.) Well may he so anxiously shut out all other mediators, whether of redemption or intercession, and all pretended merits of saints or angels, when the office of peace-maker is claimed for Him, who, by one sacrifice on the cross, propitiated for ever the offended majesty of heaven towards all who shall rely on his satisfaction in seeking to be reconciled to God. There, there is the expiatory victim, there is the meritorious ground of the peace which the Gospel proclaims, and which the ministers of that Gospel are sent to promote, by "beseeching men in Christ's stead to be reconciled to God. There is the pledge and purchase-price of our pacification with our heavenly Father."² There is the object on which faith reposes in approaching "the throne of grace" for pardon, reconciliation, and eternal life.

This explains what the apostle had said, "That in all things Christ was to have the pre-eminence." (verse 18.) This shows us in what sense "it pleased the Father that in

Christ should all fulness dwell." (verse 19.) This unfolds St. Paul's language in his Epistle to the Ephesians, "For He is our peace"—"who came and preached peace to you,"—addressing himself to the Ephesian converts,—"which were far off, and to them that were nigh,"—the Jewish believers—"For through him we both have access by one Spirit, to the Father."³

By him to reconcile all things unto himself : by him, I say, whether they be things in earth or things in heaven.

2. Such is the surprising extent of this reconciliation ; for though, strictly speaking, it takes place only between God, and man the sinner and rebel ; yet as holy angels, and all creatures in heaven and earth, entered, so to speak, as legal subjects into the quarrel, and took part with their Almighty and insulted Lord, Christ is said to have reconciled them "by the blood of his cross."

Thus the reconciliation embraces analogically* every creature and thing, to which the breach itself in any degree extended.

The whole creation was made through man's sin "subject to vanity ;" and "groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now."⁴ The fabric of nature, and the inferior animals, were compelled, as it were, to take up arms against man, to whom originally the "dominion"⁵ over them was given.

The heathen world, having lost the traditions of the divine revelation made to Adam, "groaned under the bondage of corruption."⁶

The chosen nation were dissevered from the great family of mankind, and were generally filled, at the time of our Lord, with bitterness and contempt for the Gentiles.

Holy angels were separated and estranged from the fallen race, and became their adversaries and the instruments of the divine displeasure against them. They ranged them-

* Davenant.

3) Eph. ii. 14—18.

4) Rom viii. 20—23.

5) Gen. i. 26.

6) Rom. viii. 20—23.

selves on the side of their Creator, and renounced all friendship with man, the moment his rebellion broke out.

But, lo, in Christ *it hath pleased the Father to reconcile all things unto himself, whether they be things in earth or things in heaven*: it hath pleased him, as our apostle more fully expresses himself in his Epistle to the Ephesians, “In the dispensation of the fulness of times, to gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth”—“according to the working of his mighty power, when he raised Christ from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principalities, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: and put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church.”⁷

The foundation was thus laid of an universal peace and reconciliation, as well with man and all the lower creation on earth, as with the holy angels also in heaven, as they are severally, and according to their measure, capable of it.

Angels are restored to man’s interests, and “sent forth to minister to the heirs of salvation.”⁸ They are now confirmed, also, as we have reason to think, in their state of purity and happiness by the one great Pacificator, and are “gathered together in one”⁹ harmonious body under Christ.

The creature, and especially the heathen world, are virtually and in promise “given” to Christ “for his inheritance,” and are “waiting,”¹⁰ like the suppliant of Macedonia, in the vision to St. Paul, for the minister of reconciliation to “come over and help them.”¹¹ Their “earnest expectation is directed towards the manifestation of the sons of God.”¹²

The fabric of nature and the irrational animals are restored in some measure, and re-established, each to its proper end; and “delivered” in part “from the bondage of

7) Eph. i. 10, 19—22.

10) Ps. ii. 8.

8) Heb. i. 14.

11) Acts xiii. 9.

9) Eph. i. 10.

12) Rom. viii. 19.

corruption"¹³ and the abuses to which man's apostacy, cruelty, and idolatry, had subjected them.

Jews and Gentiles, moreover, began to lay aside their pride and enmity; and numbers of them at the day of Pentecost united, and all of them will hereafter unite, in the faith of the one Mediator, "who is our peace, and hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us, and reconciled both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby."¹⁴ "And so all Israel shall be saved."¹⁵

And, as the reconciliation is more and more carried into full practical effect, man will be united to man all over the world, till at length "the wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard lie down with the kid, and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together, and a little child shall lead them"—"and they shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain;" "for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea."¹⁶

And at last, in the heavenly state, the reconciliation will be perfected—*things in earth and things in heaven* will be entirely pacified, and man will be translated to the glorious "city, the heavenly Jerusalem, and an innumerable company of angels, and to the general assembly and church of the first-born which are written in heaven, and to God the judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant."¹⁷

What a sublime scene is here presented to us in the vast extent and efficacy of our Lord's reconciliation!

If men would send us to angels and saints for any part of our salvation, we resent the suggestion as blasphemous. The Lord Christ is more than sufficient for us. We inquire not whether the angels and saints, whom certain divines recommend to us, have the merits necessary to expiate any one of our sins, or the power and omniscience needful for

13) Rom. viii. 21

14) Eph. ii. 14—16.

15) Rom. xi. 26.

16) 1-s. xi. 6-9

17) Heb. xii. 22-23.

the knowing and supplying of the least of our wants ; for, whatever they are, they are nothing to us in this matter. We want them not. Having Christ *in the blood of his cross* as our intercessor and head, why should we go to creatures ? Having “the image of the invisible God” in our Almighty Reconciler, what have we to do with fancied subordinate mediators ? Our faith follows the revealed purpose of the Father, *by him to reconcile all things unto himself, whether they be things in earth or things in heaven.* We cling to this simple and glorious way of access to the throne of grace. We will not lose our own souls, nor cast an insult on our divine Reconciler, by giving to creatures, “visible or invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers,” any part of the honour which they are so far from deserving, that they themselves needed first to be *reconciled* and “gathered into one” by him. No ; they “were created by him and for him,” and “by him they” every moment “subsist ;” and in him they have received the confirmation in holiness and joy which they now at length possess. To Christ, therefore, both they and we adhere. To him, our “Head,” our “First-born from the dead,” our “Reconciler,” our High Priest, our Propitiatory Sacrifice, our Intercessor, the one only and all-sufficient Mediator between God and us, we look for pardon, peace, adoption, strength, answers to prayer, and eternal life.

LECTURE X.

APPLICATION OF CHRIST'S RECONCILIATION TO THE COLOSSIANS.

COL. i. 21—23.

THE apostle having laid a broad foundation for his doctrine of reconciliation, proceeds to the application of it to

the case of the Colossians. For man, sinful man, is, as we have observed, the only party properly, and in the strict meaning of the term, that needs to be reconciled to his offended Maker, as he alone is the transgressor, and the cause of all the misery in the world; as he alone is capable of pardon, renovation, adoption, and union with his God, in which reconciliation formally consists; and as he alone will and must be lost for ever, unless he obtains these blessings. It is to the salvation of man that the Scriptures, therefore, every where refer whatever they propose to us in all the branches of this doctrine.

In these verses, then, we have the apostle's application of the doctrine of our Lord's universal reconciliation set forth to the Colossians; in which, 1st. The corruption of our nature is deeply painted; 2nd. The meritorious cause of this reconciliation again distinctly marked out; 3rd. The end in view proposed; and 4th. The necessity of continuing steadfast in the faith declared.

21. *And you, that were sometimes alienated and enemies in your minds by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled.*

22. *In the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable, and unreproueable in his sight.*

23. *If ye continue in the faith, grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the Gospel.*

Particulars move the mind more than generals. The apostle, therefore, comes to the individual case of the Colossians, as ministers now should do to that of their hearers. After stating the immense glory of Christ as Reconciler, and the vast extent of his work, St. Paul, coming to the individual case, says, *And you*—you Colossians—you in particular—you to whom I am writing—you whom the seducers are endeavouring to draw aside—*you were sometimes alienated, and enemies in your minds by wicked works.*

1. Observe how strongly the corruption of our nature is depicted in several particulars.

The Colossians, and all men since the fall, are by nature *alienated*, estranged from God and goodness, from Christ and salvation, from the knowledge and obedience of faith, from the life and love of their Creator, from spiritual feelings, affections, and duties ; in a word, from the “commonwealth of Israel, and the covenants of promise ; being without hope and without God in the world.”¹

The case, indeed, is more strongly glaring and miserable with regard to heathens, such as the Colossians were before their conversion. For the faint traces of conscience and original revelation were in them so buried under a mass of idolatries, false notions, superstitions, vices of every kind, intellectual darkness, and the bonds of corrupt usages and traditions, that they were, both in their interior state before God, and in their outward condition in the eyes of mankind, wholly *alienated* from the true religion, just as the Hindoos and Mohammedans in India now are. Still the case is substantially the same with all of us, till we are actually reconciled to God by faith in the blood of Christ.

Accordingly the apostle, blessed as he was with the highest outward privileges, joins himself in his description of the corrupt state of the Gentile Ephesians before their conversion. Mark, I pray you, his language ; “You hath he quickened who were dead in trespasses and sins ; wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the Spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience”—thus far we may perhaps suppose that the apostle had in his eye the heathen only ; but he proceeds, “Among whom we all ” (we Jews as well as Gentiles, high as we were placed in the possession of the means of knowledge, and favoured, as we were, with sacraments and the inspired oracles of God) “we all had our conversation in times past.” And then he lays down the broad features of alienation from God, wherever they are found, and which are common to fallen man—“In

1) Eph. ii. 12.

the lust of the flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind"—and from this he draws the general conclusion, "and were by nature," all of us, Jews as well as Gentiles, "the children of wrath even as others."²

Such is the first step in the description of our corrupt and fallen state. The next follows,

And enemies in your minds.

They were not only alienated, but, more than this, were actually at enmity in their minds with God. For the carnal mind, or the minding of the flesh, "is enmity against God."³ It hates God and makes war upon him in proportion as his real character and government in providence and grace, are discovered. It dislikes the revelation made in holy Scripture of his glorious attributes, of his holiness, justice, and truth; of his sovereignty and law; of his hatred of sin; of the eternal judgment he will hold hereafter; and the heaven and hell to which men will be for ever assigned. It dislikes, also, his astonishing scheme of mercy and reconciliation in the blood of the cross; his demand of the obedience of faith; the repentance and renunciation of all sin which he enjoins on us;—the reliance on the alone merits of Christ which he requires; the change of heart and life which he calls on men to seek, and which he promises to work in them by his Spirit; and the holy life of separation from the world to which he obliges all his servants.

To all these and the like parts of the divine character and will, man by nature is an enemy; and this not accidentally, and as the effect of temptation or evil example merely, but by the purpose of his *mind*: in his understanding the queen of the soul; in his will; and in his affections, as well as in all his inferior appetites. You *were alienated*, says the apostle, *and enemies in your minds*, that is, determinately and thoroughly; a fixed enmity to God occupying your whole soul; and this from "the vanity of your minds, having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of

² Eph. ii. 1—3.

³ Rom. viii. 7.

God, through the ignorance that is in you, because of the blindness" and hardness "of your hearts."⁴

This appeared *by wicked works*. This is the third step in our apostle's dark picture. Not only are we *alienated*, and *enemies*, and this in *our minds*, but our wicked and sinful actions prove the interior hatred of God which is hidden in the heart. For men excuse themselves, and deny the charge of being alienated and enemies in their minds to God; and therefore St. Paul proves his statement by the fruits which their corruption of nature produced.

What these wicked works are, the apostle shall teach us. "Being filled," he says to the Romans, "with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity, whisperers, backbiters, haters of God, spiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, without understanding, covenant-breakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful; who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them;" consent with them "that do them."⁵

Let conscience, then, say whether these are not too much the actions of all men now, who are still unreconciled to God, though bearing the Christian name. And if they be, which no one can for a moment deny who knows himself, or looks around him in the world, then the apostle's proof is admitted. These wicked works demonstrate that by nature we are all *alienated and enemies in our minds*.*

Yet now hath he reconciled in the body of his flesh through death.

* This description of our apostle broadly and decidedly condemns the popish and semi-popish doctrines, that original sin is seated chiefly in the lower appetites: that man may merit grace of condignity and congruity; and that the Gentiles or others might by philosophy and secular erudition render themselves agreeable to God.

4) Eph. iv. 18.

5) Rom. i. 29—32.

Here the apostle marks again, in the strongest terms, the means of our reconciliation. He had already laid this down in other words, verse 20, as the foundation of the vast blessing of reconciliation in all its extent, "Having made peace through the blood of his cross." But he repeats it here on account of its great importance to the entire scope of his Epistle.

From their awful state by nature, the Colossians had been actually delivered. *And you hath he reconciled*—brought into a state of submission, peace, pardon, adoption, reconciliation and hope of glory. "To you the Gospel has come," as though the apostle had again said, "As it has in all the world, and hath brought fruit as it did also in you, since the day ye heard it, and knew the grace of God in truth."

The Gospel had been preached to them; they had been induced to believe it; thus they had been "justified by faith, and had peace with God by our Lord Jesus Christ;"⁶ and they had been also brought by the Holy Spirit to love and serve God by a mutual and cordial reconciliation with him; and thus were "walking with God" in a blessed amity and a holy course of filial and grateful obedience.

The reconciliation was now effected. The sinner's disposition was changed; he accepted the offers of peace made in the Gospel, and was reinstated into more than the blessings he had lost by the fall.

And the meritorious cause of this was, as before declared, the sacrifice of Christ. *In the body of his flesh through death*—not Christ's divine nature, which was incapable of suffering, but in his human, *the body of the flesh*, which he had taken upon him; and this *through death*, wherein he underwent all that punishment which our sins had deserved, "being made sin for us,"⁷ and suffering, "the just for the unjust, to bring us to God."⁸

This body of his flesh through death stands opposed to the

6) Rom. vi. 1.

7) 1 Co. x. 31.

8) 1 Pet. iii. 18.

bodies of the animals offered under the Jewish law, to which the false teachers at Colosse were endeavouring to bring the people back. But all these bodies of bulls and goats were now superseded; the one *body of Christ's flesh* which he assumed that he might be capable of suffering as a satisfaction to divine justice for the sins of men, was abundantly adequate. "In him we are complete."

And this reconciliation was God's act: *And you hath he reconciled.* In human disagreements, it is the party who commits the offence that is expected to be the first to seek reconciliation. But, lo, here it is God himself who begins the reconciliation, devises the plan, proclaims⁹ the mercy, invites sinners to himself, and "works in them to will and to do of his good pleasure."⁹ "Not that we loved God, but God loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins."¹⁰

3. *To present you holy, and unblameable, and unreprouvable in his sight,* at the last great day, when "we must appear at the judgment-seat of Christ, to receive the things done in the body, whether they be good or bad."¹¹

Then will those who have been thus reconciled to God be presented perfectly sanctified and free from all remains of sin.

They are gradually made holy in this world. They forsake every known sin. They "cleanse themselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God."¹² They are sincere and consistent in the mortification of the flesh.

But they are not perfect in the eye of an all-seeing-God. Their works cannot abide the scrutiny of the divine justice. They continually pray, "Enter not into judgment with thy servant, O Lord, for in thy sight shall no man living be justified."¹³ And, therefore, in point of merit they rely to the last only on the blood of the atoning cross.

9) Phil. ii. 13.

12) 2 Cor. vii. 1.

10) 1 John iv. 10.

13) Ps. cxliii. 2.

11) 2 Cor. v. 10.

But at the last day, when they shall be presented by their great High Priest and Saviour as his children and members, they will be entirely holy, the remains of sin being removed at death; and will appear *unblameable and unproveable in God's sight*.

This is the second great blessing of our reconciliation and salvation—newness of life. For all the benefits of Christ consist of two main parts—remission of sins, and the sanctification of our natures. By the one we are justified, brought into a reconciled state; by the other, we are formed after the divine image, and made meet to walk with our reconciled God on earth, and to be “partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light” in heaven. The two are inseparable. Gratuitous righteousness in Christ received by faith is not conferred without regeneration and sanctification to the obedience of righteousness, being also wrought in us by the Holy Spirit. The second, however, is ever incomplete and ever mixed with original sin and daily infirmities in this life; and therefore our reliance is ever reposed, as we have said, on the sufferings and obedience of Christ, who is “made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption.”¹⁴

4. *If ye continue in the faith grounded and settled; and be not moved away from the hope of the Gospel.*

This is the fourth and last part of our apostle's doctrine of the application of reconciliation. For there is always a danger of our abusing the riches of the divine grace. There are many “way-side” and “stony ground,” and “thorny ground” hearers. There are many temporary believers, many backsliders, many apostates; there are “foolish” as well as “wise builders,” and “foolish” as well as “wise virgins.”¹⁵

The apostle, therefore, modifies and corrects, as it were, the statement he had so absolutely made, by adding, what he implied throughout, and what is implied in every decla-

14) 1 Cor. i. 30.

15) Matt. vii. 24—27, xiii. 4—7; xxv. 2.

ration of the Gospel, the condition, the *sine quâ non*, that without which the blessing promised could not be finally obtained.

This is, then, an exhortation to perseverance in the faith. They were still in progress. The grace hitherto bestowed on them would be in vain, unless they remained in the sincerity of the Gospel. They had not yet reached the goal. False teachers had risen up among them *to move them away* and carry them off *from the hope of the Gospel*, and transfer their faith to saints and angels, and commandments of men, and human imaginations; and their stability in Christ was endangered.

He exhorts them, therefore, to continue *grounded and settled* in the faith which he had taught them. Their faith must not be a mere opinion, bottomed on the artifices of men, and liable to be shaken by every wind of doctrine; but a *grounded and settled* persuasion wrought by the Holy Spirit in their minds. It must be like the house raised by "the wise builder" on "the rock," and fixed immoveably there; so that when "the rains descend, and the floods come, and the winds blow upon it, it may not fall, being founded on a rock."¹⁶

This holy steadfastness of faith is to be earnestly sought for and gradually acquired in the means of grace and by fervent prayer. Fear of coming short is one principal means of the Christian's continuing in the faith to the end. It is the apostle's usual manner to caution his converts against deceiving themselves, or falling away from God. He declares as to his own case, that he "kept under his body, and brought it into subjection, lest that by any means after he had preached to others, he himself should be a cast-away."¹⁷ And all this is quite consistent with a prevailing peace and joy in the Holy Ghost, and indeed supports and feeds the springs of that joy; nor does it all involve that perpetual and systematic doubt, even unto death, of our ac-

16) Matt. vii. 24—27.

17) 1 Cor. ix. 27.

ceptance with God, which the Romish divines and their followers inculcate, in order to build up their superstitions, and will-worship, and merits of men.

Let us, then, watch and pray against the seductions of false doctrine from without, the corruption of our hearts from within, and Satan's temptations as to both. Let us be "diligent to make our calling and election sure."¹⁸ And in this temper we may humbly rely on the divine grace, that "nothing shall separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."¹⁹

But if any have not yet been reconciled to God at all, but are still *alienated and enemies in their minds by wicked works*, let the astonishing scheme of mercy in Christ Jesus strike their conscience. There is but the moment of life to effect this great work of our reconciliation.

"Now, then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us, we pray you in Christ's stead be ye reconciled to God."²⁰ "Agree with thine adversary quickly whilst thou art in the way with him, lest at any time the adversary deliver thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the officer, and thou be cast into prison. Verily I say unto thee, thou shalt by no means come out thence till thou hast paid the uttermost farthing."²¹

LECTURE XI.

MINISTRY AND SUFFERINGS OF THE APOSTLE—MYSTERY OF THE CALLING OF THE GENTILES.

Col. i. 23—26.

OUR four last lectures were on stupendous subjects—the personal and mediatorial glory of Christ, and the whole doctrine of his reconciliation.

18) 2 Pet. i. 10.

19) Rom. viii. 39.

20) 1 Cor. v. 20.

21) Matt. v. 25.

Our present lecture will be of easy comprehension. It will be confined to some of the additional considerations, by which the apostle further exalts and commends the Gospel, in order to strengthen his cautions to the Colossians not to suffer themselves to be “moved away from the hope of it” by the arts of seducers.

23. *Whereof ye have heard, and which was preached to every creature under heaven, whereof I, Paul, am made a witness.*

One reason why the Colossians should continue in the faith of the Gospel, in addition to the overwhelming ones flowing from the divine person and offices of Christ, was, that it had already been proclaimed in all its simplicity over the then known world, and was received as the universal religion without the law of Moses.

The Jewish notions and heathen speculations of the false teachers were merely scattered here and there in separate spots, as Colosse, Laodicea, or Hierapolis; and received only amongst light and unstable souls. But the Gospel which St. Paul and the other apostles had preached was of an universal character,—it was the true word of the Son of God, according to the predictions of “all the prophets which had been since the world began;”¹ and announced in the full latitude of the divine command, “Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature.”²

This identity of the Gospel with all the purposes of God made known in different ages, the harmony and consistency of all its parts, though proclaimed by so many different apostles and evangelists, its adaptation to the whole race of mankind, its freedom from all local and burdensome rites, the miraculous powers exercised by its first preachers, and its supernatural propagation, formed a body of evidence which ought far to outweigh in the minds of the Colossians the novelties and follies of a few self-constituted teachers.

The language of our apostle here furnishes a strong

1) Acts x. 43.

2) Mark xvi. 15.

argument for Christian missions. Why is the Gospel not preached now *to every creature under heaven?* , Because of the decay of faith and love in the Christian church. Let the life and simplicity of the Gospel prevail once again, and faith in the glory and work of Christ and the sufficiency of his salvation be vigorous; and missions will resume their activity, as they have begun to do, for the last forty years, throughout the Protestant churches.

24. *Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh, for his body's sake which is the church.*

Our apostle's second argument for the Colossians' continuance in the faith of the Gospel is, that the sufferings it may bring with it are no objections to its truth, but are amongst the highest of the triumphs which it achieves, and so are, in fact, evidences of its divine origin.

For the Colossians might ask why the apostle exhorted them to persevere in the Gospel, when they were so oppressed with afflictions and persecutions, and when he himself was in prison?

The apostle answers this objection by saying that these afflictions were appointed by Almighty God, and that he rejoiced in them, as endured for the name of Christ, and for the edification and consolation of the church. And he thus intimates that they should rejoice in their afflictions for Christ's sake, also, and consider them as an occasion to prove to themselves and others the solid support which Christianity gave to its followers, and its intrinsic and divine truth.

By *the afflictions of Christ* here, St. Paul does not mean the pains which Christ suffered in his own person even unto the death upon the cross as the meritorious purchase of our salvation; for the afflictions which he refers to in the verse before us are not finished, whereas those of Christ's person were completed and accomplished previously to his resurrection; but he means the afflictions which he suffered for the

sake of Christ, for his name, in fellowship with him, and in the discharge of the ministry of the Gospel which he had committed to him.

The mystical union is so strict between Christ and his members, and the sympathy he feels in their sufferings so tender, that he considers the injuries inflicted on them as done to himself; Christ, the head, and the faithful who are his members, constituting one body. "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?"³ was accordingly the language of our Lord to our apostle before his conversion. "That I may know him, and the fellowship of his sufferings,"⁴ says St. Paul to the Philippians. So "the reproach which Moses esteemed greater riches than the pleasures of Egypt," was "the reproach of Christ."⁵ And our apostle assures the Corinthian church, that "as the sufferings of Christ," that is, the sufferings endured for his sake, "abounded in him, so also his consolation abounded by Christ."⁶ And he exhorts Timothy to be "a partaker of the afflictions of the Gospel,"⁷ or of Christ; and uses the single word "Christ" in another place to represent all the multitude of the faithful, together with their divine head, "So also is Christ."

Thus the afflictions which our Lord suffered in his own person for our redemption, and also those which his faithful people endure for his name (and of which our apostle is speaking) are called, in different senses, *the afflictions of Christ*.

And the allotted measure of these sufferings for Christ's name being appointed and determined in the counsels of God, are to be fully accomplished, and what is wanting or *behind* of them in each case is *to be filled up*. The apostle and the faithful in different churches had already "endured a long fight of afflictions;" but the measure as respected St. Paul and the Colossians, was not full; there was something *behind* still; a remainder of trials; a part of the race to be run;

3) Acts ix. 4.

4) Phil. iii. 10.

5) Heb. xi. 26.

6) 2 Cor. i. 5.

7) 2 Tim. i. 8.

some of the task to be accomplished ; the rest of the good fight to be sustained.

“Christ hath accomplished,” as though the apostle had said, “all the sufferings for my redemption,” (all the *προτεγήματα*, as the fathers termed them,) “and I am now filling up what is behind,” (the *ἰσπεγήματα*)* “what falls to my turn ; all that remains for me in the purpose of God, to go through for his *body’s sake, which is the church.*”

For this is the end which the apostle had in view, the edification and consolation of the church, which Christ had purchased with his own blood. “I endure all things,” he says to Timothy, “for the elect’s sake, that they may obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory.”⁸

And in these afflictions St. Paul *rejoiced*. Such was his love to Christ, and desire to be conformed to his sufferings, such was his anxiety for the souls of his fellow-creatures, such the consolation poured into his heart, and such his submission to the will of God, that he rejoiced in his sufferings for the Colossians. So he teaches Timothy, “It is a faithful saying, for if we be dead with him, we shall also live with him ; if we suffer, we shall also reign with him.”⁹ And in like manner to the Romans, “If children, then heirs, heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together.”¹⁰

Bear up then, brethren, under your sufferings for the Gospel. *Rejoice in filling up what is behind of the afflictions of Christ, and of his members in your flesh.* Remember how precious to him is *his body the church* ; and how precious it should therefore be to you. Rejoice to console and edify it by your example. Ministers and missionaries especially, rejoice to suffer for Christ. Your difficulties, your weakness of health, the reproaches cast on you, your persecutions, the strain upon your minds and bodies, the breaches in your

* Davenant.

8) 2 Tim. ii. 10.

9) 2 Tim. iii. 11, 12.

10) Rom. viii. 17.

family affections by distance and death, the slights put upon you by professed Christians, the disappointments and griefs occasioned by your flocks ; the backslidings and apostacies, the divisions and schisms which may arise—let nothing deject you—*fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in your flesh for his body's sake, which is the church.* Remember what apostles and prophets, what our reformers and martyrs, what our doctors and confessors, what the primitive Christians especially suffered for Christ, and follow them through their cross to their crown.*

The subsidiary evidence to Christianity, arising from the sufferings of the first teachers of the Gospel ; from the patience unto death which they exhibited ; the new course of life they took up on the footing of the miraculous fact of our Lord's resurrection ; their uniform and unbroken testimony to that fact, even unto martyrdom ; the purity and benevolence of the morals of the religion they propagated ; and their personal simplicity and disinterestedness, is strong and obvious ; and the number of persons bearing this witness under such circumstances, not one of whom ever varied in his testimony, renders the proofs irresistible.†

* The Romanists assert from this text that St. Paul by these sufferings expiated his own sins and those of other believers ; that he gave the church the means of increasing this treasure of satisfaction : that as God remits only the guilt of sin to the penitent after baptism, and commutes eternal punishment for temporal, the superabundant merits of St. Paul, of the Virgin Mary, and the martyrs, may be transferred by the pope to whomsoever he pleases ; and, being mixed with the merits of Christ, may avail for their deliverance from purgatory, and their admission to heaven ; and thus indulgences are a salutary practice.

Such is Popery. We assert boldly that every link in the chain is blasphemous, and without the pretence of support from this or any other text of holy Scripture ; that the entire guilt of sin, with all its consequences, temporal and eternal, is remitted to the believer through the blood of Christ ; that no saint ever possessed a superabundance of merits ; nor expiated a single sin either of himself or others ; and that the pope is in nothing more evidently the "Antichrist" and "the Man of sin," than in these most arrogant and soul-destroying assumptions.

† Paley.

25. *Whereof I am made a minister according to the dispensation of God which is given to me for you, to fulfil the word of God.*

The apostle proceeds to exalt the value of the Gospel by a third argument, the high and responsible dispensation of it committed to him. There was an economy, a solemn appointment, a dispensation of Almighty God, (“the dispensation of the fulness of times,”¹¹) by which he entered on his ministry and apostleship. And this appointment was expressly for the sake of the Colossians, *that he might fulfil, preach fully and completely, the word of God*, and not allow any additions or alterations to be made by human philosophy or Jewish prejudices.

Such a commission marked clearly the vast excellency and importance of the treasure thus committed to his fidelity—the magnitude of the blessings of the Gospel—and the extreme folly both of those who taught without a divine commission, and of those who allowed themselves to be thus moved away from their stedfastness.

If the Colossians wanted further instructions, they were to rely upon St. Paul for communicating them. *He had fulfilled, and was ready to fulfil, the word of God.* He did not, and would not, preach the Gospel weakly, partially, obscurely; but would thoroughly go through his duty, and keep “back nothing profitable, nor shun to declare all the counsel of God.”¹²

26. *Even the mystery which had been hid from ages and generations, but now is made manifest to his saints.*

This further commended the excellency of the Gospel, that it was the throwing open of a mystery which had been *hid from ages and generations*. So our apostle elsewhere, “Whereby when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ, which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto

11) Eph. i. 10.

12) Acts xx. 26, 27.

his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit, that the Gentiles should be fellow-heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of the promise in Christ by the Gospel.”¹³

The word mystery has in Scripture two chief senses. It is applied to such things as would never have been known at all without revelation ; but which, when revealed, may be, in a good measure, explained and understood ; as the resurrection of the dead ; the satisfaction of Christ, and forgiveness of sins for his sake ; eternal judgment, and the calling of the Gentiles into the church, without circumcision and obedience to the law of Moses.

It is applied, also, to other things, which, when revealed as to the fact and existence of them, are still altogether incomprehensible to us as to the manner, and mode, and circumstances : as the adorable Trinity in Unity ; the Incarnation, and Union of the divine and human natures in the one person of Christ ; the secret and merciful will of God in our election ; the operations of the Holy Spirit ; the grace of the sacraments ; the spiritual conjunction between Christ and his church.

The mystery of the admission of the Gentiles is an example of the first class of passages. It had been *hidden from ages and generations ; but was now under the Gospel made manifest to the saints*, and might be readily understood.

Not that there had been any prohibition of the admission of the Gentiles previously. Proselytes had always been made ; but then they were circumcised and subject to the law ; or were only proselytes of the gate. And the peculiarities of the Mosaic economy, the local temple, the priesthood, the types and ceremonies, the judicial law appended to the moral and ceremonial, and the fact of there being no order of men expressly commissioned to go throughout the world for the conversion of the nations, constituted, in point

13) Eph. iii. 4—6.

of effect, an almost insuperable barrier to the frequent reduction of the Gentiles to the religion revealed by Moses.

It is true, the prophets perpetually foretold the gathering of all the world to the Messiah, and in language which implied the cessation of the law of ceremonies ; but the prejudices of the Jews prevented their seeing this ; and they universally conceived that the nations were to be brought in to their future Messiah by being incorporated into the Jewish church by circumcision, and subjection to the Mosaic ritual.

When our Lord appeared, the Jews, moreover, had lost almost all conception of a spiritual Messiah, were lifted up with pride of their descent and privileges, and filled with contempt for the Gentiles.

So profound was the mystery, that St. Peter required a vision to be vouchsafed to him to convince him of the truth ; and then had to defend himself for “ going in unto the uncircumcised.” And the strong prejudice of the converts to the Christian faith from among the Jews, threw almost all the infant churches into confusion till the period of the destruction of Jerusalem, and the desolation of their polity.

The designs of Almighty God in allowing this mystery to be hidden for nearly two thousand, or rather for four thousand years, must be left in a great measure to the depths of his counsels. It was probably, in part, to prepare the world for the advent of Christ ; to excite more general expectation ; to disprove all the vain pretensions of human power, wisdom, and civilization ; to bless mankind and lead them to the knowledge of the true God ; to magnify the grace of Christ when the mystery should be thrown open, and to prove that the Gospel, in its universal character, was no new design, but had been kept in the mind of God from eternity, and was the grand purpose of all his dispensations.

For the rest, let us restrain our curiosity. God’s will is the highest reason. Let us the more magnify him, that, after “ winking ” for so many ages at “ the times ” of heathen

“ignorance,” he now “commands all men every where to repent.”¹⁴ Let us bless God that at length the mystery is revealed.

This was done gradually. It began to be thrown open by the song of angels at the birth of Christ. It was carried on by the visit of the Magi under the guidance of the star ; by the prophetic hymn of Simeon ; by the reception of the Syrophœnician suppliant ; and the commendation of the centurion’s faith. At last, at the day of Pentecost, and by the preaching of the apostles subsequently, “with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven,” “the veil spread over all nations,”¹⁵ was removed ; and *the mystery hidden from ages and generations* was made *known to the saints*, and by them announced to the world.

May it be known to us, valued, received, acted upon ! None but *the saints* duly appreciate it. To others it is a mystery still. May we be of the number of those to whom it is communicated internally and spiritually, in all its extent and ultimate consequence to ourselves, and to the whole race of mankind !

LECTURE XII.

CHRIST THE HOPE OF GLORY—ST. PAUL’S METHOD OF PREACHING THIS MYSTERY—HIS LABORIOUS MINISTRY—RECAPITULATION OF THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Col. i. 27—29.

WE now come to the fifth additional argument of our apostle to confirm the Colossians in the faith against the false teachers. The matter of the mystery thus made known was no less than this, that Christ, “the image of the invisible

14) Acts xvii. 30, 31.

15) Isa. xxv. 7.

God," the Creator and Conservator of all worlds, "the head of the church," was set before them in the Gospel; yea, was dwelling in their hearts, as *the hope of glory*.

27. *To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles, which is Christ in you the hope of glory.*

This is by no means a subordinate argument like those which preceded and which follow it. We have here the entire scope of the Epistle, and of the Gospel itself compressed into a brief sentence. This is of the same import as the other expressions to which I referred in an early lecture; "Christ is all in all;" and, "ye are complete in him." It corresponds, also, with the solemn denunciation which conveys negatively, as we have seen, the whole of the apostle's design, "Not holding the head."

What the Colossians had to do, and what we have to do, is to reject all vain speculations which would separate us from Christ the head of his church; and to cling to him, and him only, as *the hope of glory*.

Man by nature has no hope. He is a sinner; a lost creature; under the condemnation of God's holy law, and "alienated and an enemy in his mind by wicked works." In this state there is no hope for man in himself; no hope in angels or archangels, no hope in Jewish ceremonies or heathen inventions, nor in any human devices for appeasing the just wrath of God, for atoning for past sins, or for changing the bent of his mind, and preparing him for the love of God here and the enjoyment of him hereafter.

Christ is the only *hope of glory* to a lost world. He came down from heaven to earth to reconcile man to his offended Maker by the sacrifice of the cross; he redeemed us by his blood; in him we have the forgiveness of sins; by him all that believe have a hope of glory kindled in their hearts by the Holy Ghost given unto them.

To feel our state by nature is, then, the first step in religion. Here revelation begins. Man is guilty, sinful; “without hope and without God in the world.” The whole Bible proceeds on this great truth, the fall and apostacy of man,—when this is perceived and acknowledged, every thing else will follow.

For Christ is then proposed in all his fulness of grace to the awakened mind. Pardon and reconciliation are first poured upon the soul. Then adoption, the indwelling of Christ by the Holy Spirit, love to God and man, and strength for suffering, are imparted gradually in the use of the due means of instruction and grace.

Especially, Christ, the only atonement for sin, is discerned by the eye of faith, as the way of pardon and justification before the dread tribunal of God.

When he is relied upon in these views, then a *hope of glory*, at first faint, but gradually becoming firmer and firmer, springs up in the heart of the penitent. Christ dwells in him by his Spirit. Christ is within him; in his will, in his affections, in his whole soul, as the Lord of conscience, and the master and guide of his understanding, judgment, motives, love. “That Christ may dwell,” saith our apostle, “in your hearts by faith.”¹ “If any man love me,” saith our Saviour, “he will keep my words, and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him and make our abode with him.”²

Thus Christ is the believer’s *hope of glory*, both as to his merits imputed to him, and as to his presence abiding in the soul, sanctifying him and giving him the anticipation and earnest of the glorious “inheritance of the saints in light.”

Well may our apostle speak of *the riches of the glory*, or the glorious riches of *this mystery*—especially as made known in or *among the Gentiles* without distinction of tribe, nation, or tongue. For there are in Christ “unsearchable riches”³ to relieve the misery and poverty of a ruined, hopeless

1) Eph. iii. 17.

2) John xiv. 23.

3) Eph. iii. 8.

world. And these are *glorious* as illustrating the divine wisdom, power, love, mercy, and compassion of God, in harmony with his truth, justice, and righteousness, and also as raising the most wretched to a glorious state of bliss.

The apostle mentions this to meet the offence and contempt of the world and the insidious arts of the false teachers. What were their "beggarly elements," their "vain philosophy," their Jewish ordinances, their "worship of angels,"⁴ but a cloud thrown over the glorious riches of Christ, and a bringing in again the obscurity which the unveiled revelation of the mystery had dissipated?

Let us, brethren, make Christ, and Christ only, our *hope of glory*; and be abundantly satisfied with his inexhaustible treasures. Let him not only be amongst us in the preaching of his Word and the offers of his Gospel, but in our hearts by his Spirit!

28. *Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus.*

We are come to St. Paul's sixth argument, which is again of a subsidiary and confirmatory character: the labours which he undertook in making the mystery known.

The great subject of his doctrine is thus stated, *whom we preach*, and not ourselves, not Moses, not works of supererogation, not angels and saints, and endless ceremonies. These the seducing teachers mixed with Christ. But not so the apostle. "He knew nothing among them but Jesus Christ, and him crucified."⁵ *Whom we preach*—Christ the image of the invisible God—Christ the Head of the church—Christ the fountain of fulness—Christ the reconciliation of the world.

His manner of doing this is next to be diligently noted. *Warning every man, and teaching every man.* Warning them against errors and sophistries, cautioning them against impending dangers, opening to them the corruptions of their

4) Gal. iv. 9.

5) 1 Cor. ii. 2.

own hearts and the snares of Satan. This was the first branch of his doctrine. He aroused, alarmed, convinced, rebuked with all authority.

Then he instructed and taught them. This refers chiefly to the intellect; as the warning to the affections. The two constitute the sum of the christian doctrine. To teach first, and then to warn in public and in private every man, omitting no class and no individual of any class. General declamation will not suffice; the pleasing of this or that body of men is the ruin of souls. So the false apostles did. They neither warned nor taught, but by partiality and with an eye to the interests of their party. But the apostle, as one speaking the real doctrine of Christ with authority, warned and taught every man in the full truth of the Gospel.

And this was *with all wisdom*, with all the discretion, thought, consideration of circumstances, which the various parts of truth require, and which the age, habits, and dangers of individuals demand. A hasty, wild effusion of topics is the furthest possible from the apostle's manner. His wisdom equalled his zeal and fidelity.

The end he kept steadily in view was, *that he might present every man perfect in Christ Jesus*, as we have remarked on verse 22, perfectly reconciled to God, perfectly justified before him, perfectly prepared for glory.

29. *Whereunto I also labour, striving according to his working, which worketh in me mightily.*

This he adds from unaffected humility; and it forms his seventh argument in persuading the Colossians to steadfastness. He refers his ministry and labours to Christ's authority. He did nothing beside or beyond the immediate influences and guidance of that grace which *wrought in him mightily*, with an efficacy which constantly supported him in his trials and difficulties, and which gave a divine sanction to his doctrine.

The ministry, brethren, is a labour, a struggle. Every Christian has to labour and to strive, because Satan and the world oppose him continually ; but the minister much more : and St. Paul had more to sustain than any that have followed him. He had to clear the road on which we travel ; he had to prepare the beginnings of things which we carry on. He had to lay the foundation on which we build. We have only to copy after his example faintly and feebly. He fought the good fight in the foremost ranks of the faithful, with an intrepidity and magnanimous contempt of suffering which none can ever equal.

But the same grace which *wrought mightily* in him, will not be wanting, in its measure, to us, to confirm our message, to sanction our doctrine, to fill us with holy zeal and love, to convey our warnings and instructions to the hearts of our people.

This grace can make us apt for our work, can excite fervent desires after God and the salvation of souls, can communicate vigour to holy affections, raise us above all low and selfish aims, enable us to stand firm for the simple truth of Christ against popish and other gainsayers, support us in constancy, patience, and cheerful fortitude, amidst difficulties and persecutions, and enable us to “ finish our course with joy, and the ministry we have received of the Lord Jesus to testify the Gospel of the grace of God.”⁶ “ I laboured,” saith our apostle, “ more abundantly than they all, yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.”⁷

Here we pause. We have gone through the first chapter, in which our apostle has been establishing the truth of the Gospel in a manner adapted to the dangers impending at Colosse.

This has occupied twelve lectures. After stating in his preface, verses 1—11,* his thankfulness on their account,

* Lectures 1—4.

6) Acts xx. 24.

7) 1 Cor. xv. 10.

and offering up his prayers for their progress in grace, both of which are full of topics calculated to conciliate their affections, and to intimate tenderly their remaining dangers and imperfections, he prepares them for detecting the sophistry of the false teachers by setting forth the glory, first, of Christ's deity and creative power, and then, of his mediatorial office and grace ; that by the brightness of that sun the dim light of human inventions might be eclipsed : verses 12—19.*

He then proceeds to a sublime statement of the whole doctrine of our reconciliation with God, both in its amplitude as extending to angels and all created beings, and in its particular and proper application to the Colossians in their individual conversion and reconciliation with God : verses 20—23.

Every part of these descriptions he drew with a view to the errors beginning among them. He then exhorted them, as we saw, at the close of the tenth lecture, “not to be moved away from the hope of the Gospel ;” and he confirms that exhortation by the various considerations which we have been reviewing in the past and present ; all designed to touch their feelings, engage their confidence, and excite their desires and affections more warmly to Christ, “the hope of glory.” And he concludes with an unreserved ascription of all that he did, to the grace of God *working mightily in him*, verse 29.‡

It is in humble and most distant imitation of his divine method that we must proceed in India in building up the young and inexperienced, and in guarding them against the remains of the inundation which has threatened all the bulwarks of our Protestant faith.

Especially should we endeavour to follow our apostle in his affectionate and tender spirit, his love to his converts, and

* Lectures 5—8.

† Lectures 9 and 10.

‡ Lectures 11 and 12.

his gentle intimations, rather than rebukes, to those in danger: all connected with a firm and unbending fidelity to the truth of Christ, foresight of the wide-spread desolation which any thing interfering with his glory and mediation as the head of the church, would occasion; and a care to bar up the way against such errors by the positive and full declaration of the person, and work, and all-sufficiency of Christ; and ceaseless labours amongst his flocks.

These furnish us with directions of the utmost importance. The simple preaching of the person and work of Christ, with close application to the souls of our people, is the foundation of our ministry. This must be accompanied with tenderness, love, and wisdom, in the manner of address. And all sustained by incessant labours and fervent prayers; whilst the praise must be wholly ascribed to the gracious working of him that *worketh in us mightily*, both as to our own support and the success of our work. This is the true secret for dispersing the thickening clouds of error which would interrupt the bright shining of the Sun of Righteousness; and of bringing down the richest and most exalted of all blessings upon the souls of men—"even Christ in them the hope of glory."

LECTURE XIII.

CONFLICT AND SYMPATHY OF THE APOSTLE—ESTABLISHMENT
IN THE FAITH, BY COMFORT, UNION, AND FULL ASSURANCE
OF UNDERSTANDING.

COL. ii. 1, 2.

WE enter now upon the second main division of the whole Epistle. In his first chapter, the apostle had established the truth of the Gospel in a manner tacitly adapted to

the dangers impending in the church at Colosse. He proceeds, in the second, to refute directly the errors which had arisen among them.

In the first chapter, he had sown good seed ; in this, he goes on to root out the tares.

St. Paul's object, in the five verses which constitute his admirable and most touching exordium to this second chapter, is to establish the Colossians in the mystery of the sole and all-sufficient mediation of Christ, for which he had prepared them by his description of his person and glory in the first.

To this end he informs them, first, of the conflict he endured on this account, verse 1 ; and 2nd, points out to them some of the steps by which establishment in the faith might be obtained, verse 2. These we shall review in the present lecture ; and in the following one consider his special reason for urging the preceding arguments, verse 3 ; his caution against seducers, verse 4 ; and his commendation of their general order and steadfastness, verse 5.*

1. *For I would that ye knew what great conflict (fear or care, Margin) I have for you, and for them at Laodicea, and for as many as have not seen my face in the flesh.*

Nothing can be conceived more conciliatory and touching than these words. He had been speaking generally of his pastoral labours ; now he goes on to show the Colossians that he undertook them more particularly for their sakes, as well as for all around, even though he had never seen them in the flesh.

* Such is the wisdom and yet tenderness of this introduction, that Bishop Davenant says, there is nothing prescribed by Aristotle and Cicero for the composition of an exordium which is not found in it. It tends to make the hearer *attentive* by speaking of the greatest and rarest matters ; *docile*, by scattering tacitly the topics which were to form the sum of the discussion ; *benevolent*, by the affection and earnestness which appear in every word.

This is his first argument for their continuing established in the faith.

The word, conflict, is taken from the exertions of those who struggled in the Grecian games; and includes all his fear and care for their stability in Christ, all the anxiety of his mind day and night, all his journeys and perils, all the weariness and painfulness, the hunger and thirst, the fastings often, the cold and nakedness, and the other persecutions which he suffered, and especially his imprisonment at that time at Rome. But from the connexion, it seems especially to note his fervent wrestlings, like Jacob of old, with God in prayer; his importunity, like the widow with the unjust judge; his earnest labours and strivings of soul, with groanings and desires in his intercessions for them, which no words could fully utter, according to an expression of our apostle in another place.¹

It was no slight matter that he was interested in. The glory of Christ and the infinite value of his sacrifice and mediation were concerned. It was of such moment, that he was striving and struggling for their establishment in Christ with more effort than the combatant in the games; his whole soul and body were put to the full stretch; internal conflict in prayer, and external in corporeal sufferings were combined.

The apostle joins Laodicea, and those generally around, whom he had not visited in person, to soften the reproof to the Colossians, and to meet an objection which might be raised against his attempt to instruct them.

“You seem to point at us,” might the Colossians say, “as if we were worse than others. This you might do as respects the Romans, the Corinthians, and others, whose state you are acquainted with, and who have seen your face; but as to us the case is different. You know us not.”

“No,” may the apostle seem to reply; “I by no means think you Colossians to be worse than others. I am just as

1) Rom. iii 26.

much concerned for the converts at Laodicea and Hierapolis, the cities adjoining yours, and indeed for all who have never *seen my face in the flesh*,* as for those who have. My apostolic commission, and my conflict of soul and body, embrace them all. And though a prisoner at Rome, I feel the most lively interest in them still.”

I need not observe how tender all this was, and how exactly calculated to make way for his subsequent instruction.

The success of our ministry very much depends on two things, sympathy excited in the breasts of the flock, subordinate, of course, to fidelity in the Gospel. The ministry, indeed, is a labour even unto toil, especially in prayer. Nothing does our apostle more frequently mention than his prayers day and night for his converts. For God is the author of spiritual good in the heart of fallen man. If we would reap in the conversion of souls and their steady walk, we must plough in secret prayers and tears.

Sympathy, however, must unite with vigour and effort, or we shall be in danger of falling into harshness and severity in our manner of address. It may be doubtful whether St. Paul was most bold or most affectionate. We may, therefore, at times let our people know what *conflict* we have for them, that they may sympathize with us, and learn the care and anxiety they should feel for their own salvation. Our flocks know not what their pastors go through. When they think them most at leisure, then are they the least so. The fervent conflict of prayer is going on in secret.

Our apostle proceeds, in the second verse, to point out some of the steps by which establishment in the faith might be attained. He mentions three: comfort, union, and the full assurance of understanding in the mystery of Christ—for these were the blessings they required; their hearts were disconsolate, their love chilled, their apprehension of the

* It is this expression which seems to imply that the apostle had not actually visited Colosse; and it has led commentators generally to that conclusion.

glory of Christ beclouded by the sophistry of the false teachers.

2. *That their hearts might be comforted.*

This is the first step—comfort, encouragement, animation of soul. The word means to exhort, to raise up from dejection, to cheer and restore a labouring mind by advice and consolation, which the truth of Christ's complete adequacy for all our wants is calculated to do; whereas error in this fundamental point produces trouble, dejection, doubt and perplexity—peace and tranquillity are put to flight—the way of access to the throne of grace is obscured.

Being knit together in love.

For error divides as well as distresses. It breaks the bond of love; it splits the Christian flock into parties; it rends what ought to be the seamless robe of Christ.

The apostle, therefore, in order to their stability, wished to see them well compacted and knit together by mutual love, as the timbers of a building are joined and cohere, "by that which every joint supplieth"—each part being fitted in with all the rest—and all subserving the firmness and safety of the whole.

Without this love there could be no consolation. Division brings perturbation; union brings joy and peace. He that would have spiritual and abiding comfort, must "endeavour to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace."² "He that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God and God in him."³ "By this shall all men know that we are Christ's disciples, if we have love one to another."⁴ "That they all might be one," said our Lord in his intercessory prayer for the apostles, just before his sufferings; "as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us; that the world may believe that thou has sent me."⁵

We must not confound this blessed grace of love with indifference to truth, nor with cowardice in shunning the

2) Eph. iv. 3.

3) 1 John iv. 16.

4) John xiii. 35.

5) John xvii. 21.

offence of the cross, nor with a Gallo-spirit, which careth for none of these things. This I have already insisted on, verses 4 and 8 of the first chapter.

“Pastors owe,”—says Burnett, in answer to the popular objection with the Romanists against the Reformation as having broken the peace of the church,—“a charity to their brethren, and are to live with them in the terms of brotherly love and friendly correspondence; but if that cannot be had on easier terms than the concealing of necessary truth, or the delivering of gross errors to those committed to their charge, it is certain that they ought not to purchase it at so dear a rate. It is of great importance to maintain peace and unity; but if a party in the church does set up some doctrines and practices that so much endanger the salvation of souls, and makes advantages by these, so that there is no hope to gain them by rational and softer methods, then, as Peter was to be withstood to his face in a lesser matter, much more are these to be withstood, when the things are of great moment and consequence.”*

The office of charity in such cases is to be tender of others, to take up nothing upon report, to “believe all things, to hope all things, and to endure all things”⁶ which circumstances allow, and carry out our resistance to material error with firmness and love to the persons of our opponents, without misrepresenting or exaggerating their real sentiments, and without bitterness or imputation of motives.

I hope there is nothing in which I am more jealous of my-

* Burnett's Reformation, preface to Part II. He goes on to say, “When heresies sprang up in the primitive church, we find the neighbouring bishops condemned them, without staying for the concurrence of other churches; as in the case of Samosatenus, Arius, Pelagius; and even when the greatest part of the church was become semi-Arian, the orthodox bishops did not forbear to instruct those committed to their care according to the true faith. A general concurrence is a thing much to be laboured for; but when it cannot be had, every bishop must then do his duty, so as to be answerable to the chief Bishop of souls.”

self, placed as I am in India, on the walls of our Jerusalem, than in guarding against the slightest infringement of the true spirit of charity in the protests I have been compelled, in conscience, and as answerable for all the souls in my diocese, to enter against the semi-popish errors of the day.

Unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgment of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ :

3. *In whom (wherein) are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.*

This is the third and grand step to establishment in the faith. The Colossians needed a firmer, and more clear and adequate apprehension of the all-sufficiency of Christ for every part of their salvation.

This is a decisive proof that the apostle intended by the comfort and love he had been speaking of, such consolation and charity as rested upon a full assurance and acknowledgment of the "truth as it is in Jesus," and was fed and nourished by it. Indeed, the three steps are dependent on each other. The comfort is built on unity, and unity on a full acknowledgment of Christ. Charity first establishes herself upon truth; then steps on to unity; and, lastly, attains to consolation. As we cannot enjoy comfort without the sweetness of love, so without the clear understanding of the Gospel we cannot have love.

And here we have the key to the design of the whole epistle in somewhat more detail than I have yet noted. I mentioned as one summary the expression, "Christ is all and in all;" as another, "Christ in you the hope of glory;" as a third, "Ye are complete in him;" and, lastly, in a negative form, "Not holding the head." But here, if I mistake not, we have the true key to all the description given of the person and work of our Lord in the first chapter, and to all the direct refutation of error in this, fully developed.

The Colossians were not settled in their faith of the fulness of Christ without human traditions, Mosaic ceremonies, or

philosophical fancies. Some of them, probably only a few, were bewildered with what the false teachers told them of the various orders of angels, and the services they might perform as intercessors together with Christ. Possibly the Essenes and Gnostics might have crept in amongst them, together with the Jewish zealots and those who favoured the reveries of Pythagoras and Plato, and might have insinuated doubts as to the proper divinity of Christ, and his creation of the world, which the Gnostics ascribed to an evil principle.

All this makes the apostle so emphatic in his exhortation to them to seek *the riches of the full assurance of understanding* relating to Christ.

In this grand step, there are several subdivisions of degrees of progress—1. *Riches of understanding*—2. *Full assurance of understanding*—3. and this in *the mystery of God, and the Father, and of Christ*.

1. By *riches of understanding*, the apostle means an abundance; large stores; an accumulation of many separate parts; a luminous and adequate perception of divine knowledge. And this is in opposition to poverty of understanding; a slight and confused and general knowledge of the Gospel; a few unconnected truths laid up in the treasury of the mind.

2. *The full assurance of understanding* is that firm and secure perception of the things revealed in Scripture, arising from mature and oft-repeated study and meditation, with the internal operation of the Spirit, which enlightens the understanding, inclines the will, and enables the believer to apprehend the relation of each part of the Gospel to all the rest, and its use and position as a portion of one grand design. Thus he is prepared to reject at once, and with a clear persuasion and satisfaction of mind, any material errors which seducers may try to inculcate.

This assurance of understanding differs from that of faith, and also of hope; of both which the Scriptures also speak. "The assurance of faith"⁷⁾ is a belief, without all doubt, that

7) Heb. x. 22.

the things testified of in the Bible are true, in the word of that God who has revealed them. "The assurance of hope"^s goes further than this. It is a Christian's being persuaded that he himself is interested in all the promises which faith believes to be true. *The assurance of understanding* is that on which both are built. It is the handmaid of faith, as faith is of hope. All three admit of degrees, and are to be gradually obtained by fervent prayer, a holy walk, and diligence in the means of grace.

3. This blessed *assurance of understanding*, the apostle next represents as relating to the *mystery of God and the Father, or even the Father, and of Christ*. These words are to be read in apposition, as explaining what the riches of the full assurance of understanding, in the case of the Colossians, should be directed to; namely, that they might know and acknowledge (what their minds were unsettled in) the grace and sufficiency of Christ to all the ends of salvation, resting on the glorious mystery of the Trinity of persons in the Godhead; of the Father who gave his only-begotten and co-equal Son to be the Saviour of the world; and of Christ who, as "the image of the invisible God," became man for the purpose of suffering as a sacrifice for our sins. The apostle adds nothing expressly here of the Holy Ghost as purchased by the blood of Christ, probably because he wished to fix the attention of the Colossians on the exact question before him, which was not concerning the work of the Holy Spirit so much, as whether Jewish austerities or philosophical dreams about angels were necessary additions to the mediation by the blood of Christ.

I need not pause to direct your attention here to the incontrovertible proof of the divinity of our Lord which this passage furnishes. The mystery which the apostle speaks of, is *of God*;—there is the incommunicable name of the self-existent Jehovah who is spoken of;—and then this doctrine is divided into its parts as to the persons of the Godhead; *and, or even of the Father and of Christ*. If the Father, then, be pos-

^s) Heb. vi. 11.

essed of the names, titles, attributes, glory, sovereignty of the one supreme God, so also is Christ ; the incommunicable name of God being equally attributed to both.

It may be inquired how a mystery, such as that of the divine persons of the Godhead, can be the object of the *understanding*, and even of the *riches of the full assurance* of it ?

The answer is plain. As to the mode and manner of the subsistence of the supreme and incomprehensible Jehovah, finite man can know nothing ; this is not the object of his understanding, however illuminated. But the fact that such and such things are revealed for certain ends in Holy Scripture may be clearly understood. We can understand many practical matters affecting our salvation. We may comprehend, for example, that such and such language used of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost, and in a book designed to convey popular instruction in the usual and well-understood language of men, teaches us, though in a way not revealed, and to us incomprehensible, that they are three in one respect or respects, and one in another ; that the Father is not an attribute or mode of operation, but a personal and divine agent ; and that the Son and Spirit are equally divine persons. That the Father did not become incarnate, nor the Holy Ghost, but the Son. That the Son suffered for our sins, and not the Father, nor the Holy Ghost. These facts are clearly and without all doubt apprehended and understood by the true Christian ; though he knows nothing of the mode and manner of the subsistence and nature of Deity in themselves.

And not only are the facts clear, but also the duties and affections which we are required to exercise and perform as to each person—such as love, gratitude, prayer, reliance, worship, praise, and obedience.

And, further, the operations of each person in the scheme of salvation are distinctly to be embraced with *the assurance of understanding*. The love of the Father in giving his Son for

us ; the grace of the Son in taking our nature upon him, and dying in our stead ; the communion and work of the Holy Ghost in applying the love of the Father and the grace of the Son to the heart of man, and sanctifying him to obedience.

Once more, the position which this vast mystery holds in Scripture, and its connexion with our individual pardon and salvation, are set forth with the brightness of a sunbeam. We must be washed in the blood of Christ, in order to be accepted of our heavenly Father ; and we must be sanctified by the Holy Ghost, in order to serve him here and enjoy him hereafter ; and all the Bible turns upon these divine operations.

This is what we want in India, a well assured *understanding* of the scheme of salvation in the *mystery of God, even of the Father and of Christ*. This would establish us in the faith of the all-sufficiency of his sacrifice and mediation, and prevent us from being tossed about with every wind of doctrine. This is what we need in our infant missions ; this amongst the younger members of our services ; this in our Indo-British population ; this in our converts.

To establish them in this blessed *assurance of understanding*, must our *conflict* with Satan, and false teachers, with the world and the flesh, be carried on ; and for this must our conflict also, and struggles, and desires in prayer, be addressed to the "Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning."⁹

In this way we must pray that their hearts might be *comforted* and encouraged in their Christian profession.

In this way must we seek, that they may be *knit* and compacted *together in love* ; and that "all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, may be put away from us, with all malice, and that we may be kind one to another, forgiving one another even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven us."¹⁰ In a word, in that way must we make

9) James i. 17.

10) Eph. iv. 31, 32.

the acknowledgment of the mystery of the person and mediation of Christ the central object of all our doctrine, all our precepts, and all our labours to build up in unity, love, and consolation our christian flocks.

LECTURE XIV.

TREASURES OF WISDOM AND KNOWLEDGE IN CHRIST—CAUTION AGAINST SEDUCERS—ORDER AND STEDFASTNESS OF THE COLOSSIANS.

Col. ii. 3—5.

THE blessed apostle proceeds now to urge upon the Colossians the all-sufficiency of Christ's mediation, 1st. By a special reason (verse 3); 2nd. By a caution against seducers (verse 4); and, 3rd. By a commendation of their general order and stedfastness (verse 5); and thus concludes the exordium to the discussion of this second chapter, and indeed to the rest of his epistle.

3. *In whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.*

This is a special reason for their pressing forward to "all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgment of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ." For in Christ were hidden *all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge*; so that he who is not eagerly desirous of the full and adequate understanding of Christ, remains unpossessed of "the unsearchable riches"¹ which he would bestow. He remains poor and low in all real wisdom and knowledge. He knows not the "treasure hid in the field," for which, as the parable teaches us, "when any one finds it, he goes and sells all that he hath and buyeth that field."²

1) Eph. iii. 8.

2) Matt. 44.

Those are, indeed, enriched with all the stores of wisdom to choose the best end, and pursue it by the best means, who understand Christ; and those are filled also with all the riches of knowledge as to the details which wisdom may employ, who have the assurance of the same mystery. He who is not content with Christ, but goes out of him to philosophy or tradition, forsakes the treasures of unbounded riches for the miserable beggary of human counterfeits.

The seducers boasted, no doubt, of their wisdom and knowledge, as extending much further than the apostle's, as reaching to disquisitions on the nature of the world, and the eternity or non-eternity of matter, as discussing the question of the *summum bonum*, or chief good of man; the orders and ranks of the angelic hierarchies; the various ways in which the worship of them would aid the mediation of Christ; the benefit of the Mosaic ceremonies and austerities, and the prodigious magnitude and beauty of the theories of Plato and Pythagoras.

"No," saith the apostle, "we want none of the wisdom of this world, nor of the princes of this world, which come to nought."³ Christ is "to us who are saved, the power of God and the wisdom of God."⁴ We have in him *all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge* to furnish our minds and direct our steps as to salvation. We have in Christ, in his person, in his glorious nature and state, "as the image of the invisible God" from eternity, as well as in his assumption of our nature, and becoming the sacrifice for sin and the "head of the church," all the abundance of *wisdom and knowledge* relating the most important and urgent necessities of man. "One thing is needful," pre-eminently and to the exclusion of every disturbing claim; and all the wisdom and knowledge to make that "one needful thing"⁵ ours, and to secure us for eternity, is laid up in store and treasured in Christ.

No earthly riches these, which are mere glittering trifles,

3) 1 Cor. ii. 6.

4) 1 Cor. i. 18.

5) Luke x. 42.

and have only a momentary and conventional value, not theories and speculations which bewilder and weaken the understanding, and obscure the light of truth, but the treasures of eternal and saving wisdom and knowledge, indispensable to the comfort, mutual love, and holy walk of the Christian here, and his preparation for endless glory hereafter.

Even in human sciences, though the principles are few, yet there lie hid in them unnumbered conclusions. And how much more in Christ and all the mysteries of his person and love ! The fundamental principles are indeed few, and may be comprehended, as we have seen, in a brief sentence ; but copious and inexhaustible treasures lie hidden in him like riches, to be acquired by diligence, prayer, and the use of other means ; under the illuminating and penetrating eye of the Holy Spirit.

There is something peculiarly striking in the whole language of our apostle here.

The allusion may be to a mine hidden and concealed in the bowels of the earth, which, when the possessor of the land discovers, he employs all diligence, and spares no expense, in order to secure the treasures. He sinks his shafts ; he opens fresh tunnels and passages as the precious ore seems to invite ; he follows the veins wherever they lead ; he breaks up new ground from time to time ; he engages more labourers and artificers to aid his research ; but, still, as he goes on, the treasure extends on all sides ; instead of exhausting the mine, it becomes more valuable daily. The veins are wider and more numerous ; the wealth is beyond computation. He enriches himself, and leaves to his successors the yet unsearchable repository.

Such are *the treasures of wisdom and knowledge in Christ* ; concealed, indeed, from the careless or the proud, as riches in a mine are from the mere traveller over the surface of the country, but opening themselves to the true believer in perpetually new and deeper veins, as he pursues his search ; and still eluding a full discovery ; still surpassing all the

comprehension of a finite being ; still leaving him in speechless admiration of what he cannot adequately fathom.

And shall any supplement be admitted from human folly to these riches ; any addition to Christ ; any meddling or mixing of tradition about angels with his mediation ? “ Shall we commit two evils,” as the Lord speaks by his prophet, “ and forsake him, the fountain of living waters, and hew out to ourselves cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water ?”⁶

No wonder the false teachers amongst the Colossians, as our superstitious divines now, have no wisdom nor knowledge as to salvation. They seek them out of Christ ; they block up the entrance to the true treasure, and then amuse us with “ old wives’ fables.” They deny the possibility of attaining the “ full assurance of understanding to the acknowledgment of the mystery of God, and the Father, and of Christ,” and set us afloat upon the doubts and uncertainty of human schemes of mediation. They shut our Bibles, and deliver us over blindfold to the priest, and then assert that implicit faith is sufficient for the laity. They exclude Christ in his simple glory and sufficiency, and then bid us take every thing upon the credit of tradition and the fathers. Their whole scheme is in the teeth of the inspired apostles, and the result is correspondent. Instead of being “ comforted and knit together in love,” and being “ grounded and settled” in the “ full assurance of understanding,” and digging deeper and deeper in the mine of *wisdom and knowledge* treasured up in him, we are distracted with endless ceremonies, and theories, and speculations, which leave us “ wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked.”⁷

No, my brethren, let us follow the apostle. Let us pray for “ the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Christ, the eyes of our understanding being enlightened, that we may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, and

6) Jer. ii. 13.

7) Rev. iii. 17.

what is the exceeding greatness of his power to usward who believe.”⁸

Ver. 4. And this I say, lest any man should beguile you with enticing words.

2. This caution is the second step in St. Paul’s exhortation to the Colossians to rely on the all-sufficiency of Christ.

For the corrupt ingenuity of man can make an apparent case out of any thing. Our conclusion as to the adequacy of Christ’s mediation rests on such reiterated, varied, and unequivocal declarations of our apostle, as seemingly not to admit of evasion. But all truths conveyed to us in human language are liable to those evasions, which it is, as it were, the property of human language to be subject to. Let true principles be mixed with false; let words as found in Scripture be applied to topics foreign from the meaning of the sacred writers; let an authoritative sense be palmed upon these divine oracles: let the pride and lust of novelty inherent in fallen man be courted, and all is easy. The seducer has implements enough.

It is fit, therefore, that the faithful should have their understandings well persuaded by the luminous instruction of the Holy Ghost. It is fit that they should be fully convinced that “in Christ are hid all the treasures” of heavenly and salutary “wisdom.” This is the clue to all the mazes of error. Those who think otherwise, are exposed to the *enticing words of man’s wisdom*. What is the cause that men of learning and talent, with their airy theories of “science, falsely so called,”⁹ involve themselves and others in so many impious opinions and superstitious practices? simply this, they are not humble enough to bow to the plenitude of divine wisdom and knowledge in Christ.

Those who profess Christianity have some reverence for truth as it is revealed in the Bible; and therefore deceivers put on the appearance of truth, as coiners imitate the stand-

8) Eph. i 18—20.

9) 1 Tim. vi. 20.

ard money of the realm to pass off their base metal ; or as the dishonest vintner preserves the colour and taste, as well as he can, of the nutritious fruit of the vine ; but dilutes it, or mixes it up with other liquids which weaken it, prevent its efficacy, or even render it obnoxious, in order to enhance his profit.*

Thus these seducers preserve some appearance of important truth in their preaching to render it more specious—there is the name of Christ, all the articles of the creed, and much affectation of wisdom ; but they corrupt it with human inventions, philosophical conjectures, and unauthorized additions, till it becomes inefficacious and even dangerous to the souls of men ; and this they do in ways that fall in with the blindness and pride of the human heart, and that enable men to unite a general acknowledgment of Christ, with a reliance on their own works and deservings, and prayers to saints and angels.

It is on this account that it has been my duty in India to proclaim the doctrine of Christ, as it were, from the house-tops. The scope of all my cautions has been this. *Let no man beguile you with enticing words.* And with this I have, as I humbly trust, earnestly recommended, also, that due and enlightened regard to the order and discipline which our next verse will lead me to enforce.

Ver. 5. For though I be absent in the flesh, yet am I with you in the spirit, joying and beholding your order, and the steadfastness of your faith in Christ.

3. This is our apostle's last step in his touching exordium. Can any thing be imagined more tender and gentle towards his feeble Colossians, or, at the same time, more encouraging to them, than this commendation of their general state ? And how much is the force of this increased by the anxiety which every word breathes, and the joy which he tells them he felt, *absent as he was in the flesh*, and a prisoner

* Scott, 2 Cor. ii. 17.

for their sakes and the other Gentiles at Rome, at *beholding in spirit* their *order* and obedience to Epaphras, Archippus, and their other affectionate pastors, and also *the steadfastness of their faith in Christ*.

His absence he had already intimated, verse 1 ; but he here recurs to it with more exquisite pathos, telling them that it made no difference in his love ; for he was *present*, as it were, *in spirit*, and rejoiced in their prosperity, just as if he were actually at Colosse or Laodicea. “Go on,” as though he had said, “as you have begun ; I joy and rejoice with you all.” “Now I live, if ye stand fast in the Lord.”¹⁰ Persevere in the good course you are holding. Let no false apostles by *enticing words* deceive you. “Hold fast that you have, that no man take your crown.”¹¹

In this commendation he unites two things, *order*, and *steadfastness in the faith* ; order, the fence and guard, steadfastness of faith, the end in view ; order, the garb and ornament, steadfastness of faith, the substance of the Christian character. Here, however, we must pause, and enter at some length into the apostle’s instruction.

The word *order* is a military term. It imports discipline, submission, prompt compliance with the commands of a captain, due attention to the rank and place each one holds, and the special duty appointed him. It stands opposed to all desultory, self-willed, sudden, isolated movements. Its importance to all success in military tactics is well known.

In a milder and gentler sense, order is equally essential in spiritual concerns. It here includes all the parts of a paternal church government ; the vigilance of ministers ; the obedience of the flocks ; the maintenance of discipline : the settled course of things for the due choice of pastors, for the administration of the word and sacraments, and the edification of the faithful.

There is nothing more important and more beautiful than *order* when connected with *steadfastness in the faith of Christ* ;

10) 1 Thess. iii. 8.

11) Rev. iii. 11.

nothing, indeed, is more vapid and heartless than mere order without the truth of the Gospel; but on the other hand nothing is sooner weakened and destroyed than steadfastness in Christ, if order be overlooked. The apostle avoids both evils, by uniting the steadfastness in their faith in Christ with due order in the church.

It is my earnest prayer that in India the scriptural and beautiful *order* of our Protestant Episcopal Church, as settled by Cranmer, Ridley, Jewel, and Hooker, may be conjoined with this *steadfastness in Christ*. Our church is comparatively new in this diocese, as Christianity is. It requires, therefore, more attention on the part of the younger members of it to enter into its real character, and to submit cheerfully to its mild regulations, so as to avoid superstition and will-worship on the one hand, and ignorance and enthusiasm on the other. When the religious principle is first awakened in the mind, the overwhelming nature and necessity of internal and vital Christianity naturally and most properly occupies the chief regard; and thence arises a danger lest carelessness as to other considerations, which though subordinate, are still necessary, should be indulged. This is wrong. Church government is of divine appointment, and demands attention in its place.

The scriptural rules are brief, but comprehensive. "Let all things be done decently and in order." "God is not the author of confusion but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints."¹² "The rest will I set in order when I come."¹³ "We have no such custom, neither the churches of God." "For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou mightest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed thee."¹⁴

Pregnant directions these; and when connected with such apostolic warnings as the following, most emphatic and conclusive. "Mark them which cause division and offences,

12) 1 Cor. xiv. 33.

13) 1 Cor. xi. 34.

14) Titus i. 5.

and avoid them.”¹⁵ “I know that grievous wolves shall enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your ownelves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them.”¹⁶ “Ye are called unto liberty, only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh.”¹⁷ “Now I beseech you, brethren, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions amongst you.”¹⁸ “Whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal?”

With such commands and cautions, the humble, peaceful members of our church will cheerfully comply. They will rejoice to walk orderly, and will not allow themselves to be *deceived with enticing words*, either as to doctrine or discipline.

And in the present day, when the invasion of a semi-popish spirit has deluged our church; when a system of uncommanded human traditions has been obtruded on us; when one and one only rigid form of church discipline and polity has been magnified extravagantly, and made essential to the being of a church; when an apostolical succession has been feigned in a sense in which it never existed; when the all-sufficiency of Christ for our salvation has been sapped by over statements about the sacraments, ceremonies, fastings, genuflexions, garments, and sub-divisions of sacred edifices—in such a day there is a danger of the pious young members of our church rushing to the opposite extreme, and throwing off that due regard to order, and that reasonable subjection to pastors, which the Scriptures, as we have seen, enjoin, and which is essential to edification and peace.¹⁹

At the glorious period of the Reformation, the fanaticism of the peasant-revolt in Germany arose at first from the mere neglect of order and respect for the directions of Luther and his noble companions.

During the times of Charles I. and the Commonwealth,

15) Rom. xvi. 17.

16) Acts xx. 29, 30.

17) Gal. v. 13.

18) 1 Cor. i. 10.

19) 2 Tim. iii. 9.

the overthrow of church and state resulted from not distinguishing between church government and order in their substantial characters, and the errors of existing functionaries; and from allowing religious enthusiasm to be embittered by political heats.

In the last few years we have had too many specimens, also, of the mischiefs occasioned by the neglect of a spirit of order and reasonable submission in indifferent points to our national church. Some of the most pious persons, apparently, have been seduced from their quiet, religious course by political partisanship, and have lost insensibly their *steadfastness and faith in Christ*, as well as aided in designs of which they were little conscious.

Thank God, both classes of evils have been in some degree checked. The semi-popish errors have been exposed by the concurrent or almost concurrent judgment of our bishops and learned clergy, together with the proceedings of one of our Universities; and their "folly is becoming manifest to all men." On this quarter we have only, in India, to watch against the remains of the poison. The outcry against the Church, on the other hand, has also been silenced, and a spirit of peace and order restored. Its efforts are more vigorously directed to the instruction and salvation of our immense population at home, and to the forming of dioceses in our colonies abroad. The mass of our people are more attached to our established worship than ever; and God is blessing and enlarging wonderfully the foreign missions of our church.

At such a moment, let me exhort my younger brethren, both of the priesthood and amongst the laity, to observe the excellent rule of our apostle. Let them unite *order with steadfastness in the faith of Christ*.

The calm and learned discussions of divines on the different branches of church questions, I have no fear of. In argument fairly conducted we stand impregnable. The various effects which early education, friendship, habits of

mind, courses of reading, example of parents, produce, are provided for, in the full toleration granted under our free government. Where conscience has peaceably and cautiously asserted its sway, however erroneous in our opinion its determinations, we are silent. The neglect of order, also, occasioned by the absolute want of ministers and churches in our crowded populations is a temporary evil, and to be pitied and remedied rather than too severely blamed. Let churches and ministers be supplied, and the evil disappears.

What I am anxious to recommend in India is a firm, enlightened attachment to our church from principle, without the condemnation of those who, quietly and without attempting violent methods, differ from us. I wish to keep our own people together. For I am perfectly persuaded that our incomparable order of ecclesiastical polity will commend itself, both from its divine authority and beneficial effects, to all thinking members of our communion more and more, in the east, as it has done for three centuries in the west.

If ever the "glorious Gospel of the blessed God" is to be diffused over the world, as assuredly it is, it will be in a way of order amongst the clergy—order amongst the members of our church—order amongst the missionaries—order amongst the catechists and converts, and order in the celebration of the word and sacraments, under the paternal superintendence of our chief pastors and bishops.

At the same time, it must ever be remembered, that order cannot supply the place of the divine blessing and grace; and that nothing will keep our people together, or prosper our missions, except as *steadfastness in the faith of Christ*, and a mild and paternal discipline, are united with a jealous adherence to his mediation, and entire reliance on the operations of the Holy Ghost upon the hearts of men. In this way will charity cement all the bonds of religious and civil society. Thus will the churches be *comforted, being knit together in love*. Thus will every thing be in its place. *Christ the hope of glory* fully preached; the *riches of the full as-*

urance of understanding in him acknowledged, and the *treasures of wisdom and knowledge hidden* in Christ sought out, will enable our pastors to say, in their measure, with our apostle, *Though we be absent in the flesh, yet we are with you in the spirit, joying and beholding your order, and the steadfastness of your faith in Christ.*

NOTE —I add a few remarks on the excellency of our Liturgy, on the weakness of the more common objections raised against it, and on the danger of a restless temper, taken from my first published sermon in India, January 6, 1833.

That our own church is founded on the apostolical model, and has all the requisites to a pure church of Christ, I will not stop to argue.

She has been acknowledged by almost universal assent to be amongst the purest of the Protestant communities; as her Liturgy, her Offices, her Articles, and her Homilies, were drawn up with the greatest deliberation, and at a time when the Reformers had for nearly half a century been acquiring maturity of judgment upon every question of doctrine and discipline. They are admitted to be most scriptural. Her moderation also on all doubtful points, the decency and simplicity of her worship, the large portion of the holy Scriptures which are read in her services, her primitive administration of the sacraments, her edifying series of fasts and festivals, have long formed a point of approximation and union for discordant parties, as tending to protect religion at once from the inroads of heresy, superstition, and enthusiasm. Especially, is her confession of faith, expanded as it is in her Homilies, a model of evangelical doctrine. She has accordingly stood forth for three centuries the bulwark of Christianity in the greatest of the Protestant nations.

With regard to the objections to which the aspect of the times at home may again have given a temporary importance, as they have been repeatedly answered, I will be almost wholly silent. I will only observe that those who withdraw from a national church, because of the necessarily general language of her offices—or because of the accidental change, by the lapse of time and the current of modern theological language, in the signification of a single term, Regeneration*—or because

* I allude to the use of the word when it occurs in Scripture and in our services, as connected with baptism, as its sign and seal, and attestation before the Church; and the more popular use of it, which has obtained for the last century, without reference to the Sacrament, and as synonymous with the numerous other terms by which the decisive commencements of conversion are designated. Define the sense in which you use the word, and the controversy in most cases would cease. So as to the other Sacrament.

of decay in that which no platform of discipline can ensure, the personal piety of her ministers—or because of supposed defects in the mode of her connexion (so salutary in itself, though not essential to her as a church) with the State which protects it—or because of the greater or less extent of dioceses, or because of the mode of apportioning support to the clergy, or because of the greater or less measure of popularity attached to her by circumstances, appear to me not to understand the grounds of communion with a visible church of Christ; which, whilst her doctrines and confessions remain untouched, her primitive ecclesiastical polity, her scriptural Articles, her devotional and sublime Liturgy—in a word, all that constitutes a pure visible Church of Christ, can never be safely deserted because of such defects as spring from the general corruption of man, or on account of the infirmities and imperfections of all national churches, or from the different degrees of the divine blessing actually resting upon her—no changes of merely ecclesiastical polity could alter these things. To advance such objections is merely to say that our church is not a perfect one. Before the members of it can consistently withdraw from its communion, and, by withdrawing, aid, however unintentionally, its overthrow, a case must be made out something resembling that of our Reformers when they came out, or rather were driven out, from the Church of Rome. 1. That her doctrines, once simple and scriptural, have been corrupted by public authoritative acts and documents. 2. That she has introduced as articles of belief tenets and usages which partake of the nature of idolatry. 3. That she has undermined the foundation of faith by setting up the authority of tradition as co-ordinate with that of holy Scripture. 4. That she has virtually introduced other mediators besides the only Mediator and Saviour Jesus Christ. 5. That she has invented purgatory. 6. That she has set up infused grace and human merits as the ground in part of our justification before God. 7. That she has set up unlimited claims of infallibility and exclusive salvation. 8. That she has made the pretended supremacy of the pope a form of communion. 9. That she has indignantly spurned at all attempts, however discreet, to restore her to her original principles and confessions. 10. That she has persecuted and silenced all who differ from her. 11. And that, instead of retracting, she has openly confirmed and made her own the accumulated errors of ages.

Here is a case clear, strong, palpable. But for individuals to begin by speculating abstractedly on their natural rights—to magnify errors and inconveniences and abuses incident to all schemes of church polity,—to abuse the exaggerated admissions made by a few inconsiderable writers, as if they contained the real truth of the case—to draw up theories of possible improvements, and to launch forth on a voyage of discovery, as

it were, after forms of ecclesiastical discipline ; as if nothing had been settled by the experience of eighteen centuries, and nothing was due to the testimony of antiquity as to matters of fact—is surely to bring in interminable confusion. A man might almost as well pretend to act thus as to his subjection to civil authority. All society, civil or religious, implies a partial sacrifice of our natural liberty for the common benefit. And no individual should disturb the peace of Christ's flock till he is prepared to reply to this question : Is he sure, if he subverts the existing order of church government, that he can substitute another decisively better ? Till he can answer this fearful question in the affirmative, the far wiser course is to give himself to prayer for that grace of Almighty God which alone can set right the disorders whether of nations or individuals—and to seek to remedy, in the unity of the Church, particular evils as they are discovered.*

It will be remembered that in all this statement we are instructing the members of our own communion only, and especially the young, in the grounds of a rational adherence to the religion of their fathers—and after repeated attacks. With others we venture not, we desire not to interfere. We yield most cheerfully to them the freedom of opinion which we claim for ourselves. To set every thing right according to our several judgments is impossible,—of controversy there is no end. Let us each, then, pursue our own conviction of duty ; and let us employ in the very best manner we can the actual materials found to our hand. Let us expend our strength, not in proselyting our fellow Christians to our particular forms, but in converting the heathen and Mahomedan population, and in promoting truth, peace, and holiness amongst all who are already Christians. This is the truly charitable spirit. In this I am persuaded I shall have the concurrence of all thoughtful and discreet persons, of whatever confession, in this vast empire. It is not such well-informed and pious persons, even if they are adversaries, that I fear. The learned members of the Church of Scotland, of all the foreign churches of Europe and Asia, and of our own settled and quiet Christian bodies, though not of our church, I esteem and venerate. It is rather the inexperience of young, though well meaning, individuals that I dread—who, though very slightly furnished with learning and only moderately read in past history, think they possess, in good intentions and a disregard of consequences, all that is necessary for assailing the most venerable and scriptural churches. To this fretful, impatient restlessness, which knows not what it wants, and which, if it could gain its end to-day, would start in a new race of agitation to-morrow, we must oppose the meek but steady front

* These sentiments, and yet more strongly expressed, I published when a private clergyman, twenty-seven years since.

of truth and wisdom. On this subject I concur with my revered predecessor, the first bishop of this See. "If they act," says that great prelate, referring to different missionary institutions, not of the Church of England, "on the views of compassion for the heathen which alone are professed," they will "avoid, instead of seeking, collision with the Established Church, or even with any sect which has accomplished so much that it may be said to be already in possession. The practicability of adopting this course of conduct for the present cannot be questioned. What immeasurable tracts still remain untrodden by believers in Christ." —"By such a course of proceeding the work of conversion would be more rapid than it is at present; and though nations might thus be gained over to modes of faith which we could not in all respects approve, yet, convinced that Christianity in any of its forms is beyond comparison better than paganism, we should bless God for the result."*

In a similar spirit, the eminently pious and learned Archbishop Wake, in the beginning of the last century, observes, "I bless God that I was born and have been bred in an Episcopal Church, which I am convinced has been the government established in the Christian Church, from the very time of the apostles. But I should be unwilling to affirm that where the ministry is not episcopal, there is no church, nor any true administration of the sacraments. And very many there are among us who are zealous for episcopacy, yet dare not go so far as to annul the ordinances of God performed by any other ministry." And the judicious Hooker, more than a century earlier, says, in his incomparable work, "Another extraordinary vocation is when the exigence of necessity doth constrain to leave the usual way of the Church; where the Church must needs have some ordained, and neither hath nor can have possibly a bishop to ordain; in case of such necessity, the ordinary institution of God hath given oftentimes, and may give, place." And so all our greatest bishops and divines from the Reformation downwards; as Mr. Goode in his incomparable work on "The Rule of Faith," has demonstrated.

For myself I am persuaded that our national establishment is peculiarly adapted for nourishing the infant churches in Eastern Asia. The native converts can never stand alone. A general Christianity would soon be no Christianity at all. A Scriptural liturgy, offices for the sacraments, a well-regulated ministry, a presiding helper and overseer, that is, a bishop, in each district, and the protection of a Christian state, are most needful for their steadfastness and growth in Christianity. Amongst the possible forms of church government, then, surely our own would have a claim to consideration, even if she had not set her foot in India. Her

* Bonney's Middleton, p. 222.

mild paternal discipline, her tolerant spirit, her moderate and wise and scriptural doctrines, her simple, affecting liturgy, would well qualify her to give solidity and permanence to the young and feeble religion of Asia. But she is already amongst us, and is gradually diffusing herself by her chaplains and missionaries. She makes therefore a peculiar demand on the allegiance of those who profess to be her members. Nor do I doubt she will take her full part in the mighty enterprise of illuminating the heathen around her, and thus become a blessing in the eastern, as she has long been in the western, world.

And surely there is an additional pleasure in propagating Christianity in unison with the sympathies and usages of our beloved country at home. To use the self-same litanies and lessons—the very catechism and offices which are in veneration there, has a sacred charm. Not to say that the training of our converts in our National Church will be the most likely way of attaching India to the British sceptre, and of creating a point of continued affection between our government and its native subjects and allies.

LECTURE XV.

EXHORTATION TO GROWTH IN GRACE—CAUTION AGAINST VAIN PHILOSOPHY — HUMAN TRADITIONS — RUDIMENTS OF THE WORLD.

COL. II. 6—8.

THE apostle having finished his introduction, proceeds now to refute the errors at Colosse which he had all along in view. But he pauses first to give a brief exhortation, for the second and third time, to grow in the faith of Christ: verses 6 and 7; and then at length, having thus prepared his way by the whole of the first chapter, and the exordium and exhortation in this, begins the direct and pointed condemnation of the false teachers, which occupies the rest of this chapter: verses 8—23.

This is a divine method, to establish our flocks well in all the mystery of Christ, first of all; and then, and not before,

to controvert any particular corruption springing up among them. Cautions against deceivers will not of themselves build up the soul in Christ; but cautions following upon the full exposition of the Gospel, and growing out of it, are of the last moment; especially when a tender and paternal spirit, with incessant labours and prayers on the part of the minister, prepares the flock for his warning voice.

6. *As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him :*

7. *Rooted and built up in him, and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving.*

In our apostle's exhortation to growth in the grace of Christ, he calls on them, 1st, to proceed in the course on which they had entered; 2nd, to seek to be established more and more in the faith; 3rd, to remember the instructions they had heard; and 4th, to mingle abundant acts of gratitude with all their other religious duties and feelings.

As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him.

1. They had by true faith received Christ the Lord into their understandings, hearts, and affections, as their only Saviour. They had embraced him as the "Deliverer from the power of darkness;" as having made "redemption through his blood;" as the image of the invisible God," and the "first-born of every creature;" as the Creator, Conservator, and Final End of all things. They had received him as "the Head of the church," as having "made peace by the blood of his cross," and reconciled them thereby to their offended Maker, Sovereign, and Judge. They had received him as "their hope of glory," and as the great mystery of grace amongst the Gentiles, "in whom were hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge."

They had only then to proceed and walk on in the way in which they were. Every course of life is described in Scripture by the familiar image of a way. So, "the way

of the just is uprightness :” “the way of transgressors is hard ;” and “the way of the wicked God turneth upside-down.”

Thus the apostle exhorts the Colossians, as they had received Christ, to go on and to *walk in him* as the way to heaven in all the acts of holy love, universal obedience, and simple dedication to his service. They had received him aright, they had submitted to him in all his characters and offices, they had embraced him in every part of his salvation ; in the same manner, then, let them proceed and walk in him. For Christ is “the way, as well as the truth and the life.”¹ He is the right path ; the king’s highway to glory ; the royal road to heaven.

In this way they must not stand still, not go back, not hesitate ; but go straight on from day to day, as a wise and steady traveller, who does not forsake his road, but pursues it to the end of his journey. Day by day, week by week, we must walk in Christ—“walk worthy of the vocation wherewith we are called.” The way is sure ; the road firm and good ; the direction it takes straight for the heavenly city. Go on, then, and turn not aside into by-paths, or flowery meads of error, or what may seem a nearer and pleasanter road.

This is one part of growth in the grace of Christ ; another follows :

Rooted and built up in him, and established in the faith.

2. Establishment in Christ would follow a close walk with him in his ordinances and commandments. This stability is more than “the assurance of understanding” spoken of in verse 2. That related to a firm and full conviction and comprehension of “the mystery of Christ,” as the foundation of the peculiar scheme of the Gospel. The being *rooted, and built up, and established in the faith*, includes much more ; it is a growth in the entire faith, and love, and hope

¹ John xiv. 6.

of Christ Jesus, with all its inward experience and holy fruits.

The apostle had used similar language, chap. i. 25. "If ye continue in the faith, grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the Gospel." His copious prayers, also, in verse 2nd of this chapter, and 9th, 10th, and 11th of the first, implied, as we have said, the same sentiments.

St. Paul employs two metaphors in the passage now before us. They should be *rooted in Christ*, as a tree "planted" in a firm and immoveable soil, "and spreading out its roots by the river."²

The other image is taken from an edifice; they must be *built up in Christ*, as the sure foundation; remembering that a house not sustained on an adequate and firm base will fall.

In both ways, as a tree and as a building, they must be *established in the faith*. All the parts of the building must rest on Christ—all the roots of the tree must be fixed in him and attached immediately to him. The Colossians must not only walk in him externally, but have the internal roots of their religion worked into him, and all the superstructure reposing upon him directly, as the only foundation laid in Zion.

Those who cleave to Christ in profession only, whilst their roots are fixed elsewhere, and their house rests on some other foundation, will never resist the inundations of error, and the storms of adversity.

3. The apostle adds, 3rdly, that they should remember the instruction they had heard.

As ye have been taught. He had already referred to Epaphras, i. 7, and to his own incessant labours and prayers for them: verses 23, 28, and 29. He now repeats the admonition, to show them that God works ordinarily by means of his faithful ministers; that they must not be weary of the doctrine they had received; nor seek new teachers; and

²) Jer. xvii. 8.

that steady docility to the instructions of Timothy, Epaphras, Archippus, or others, their appointed shepherds, would be a chief step to their establishment in the faith.

4. *Abounding therein with thanksgiving*: for the magnitude of the benefits they have received should not be forgotten. With these they should cheer and console their hearts under difficulties. Gratitude would also engage Almighty God to grant them farther benefits, and would tend to keep them from the sophistries of false teachers. "The joy of the Lord," says the prophet, "is your strength."³

8. *Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ.*

In these words, and in the three verses of which they are a part, verses 8, 9, 10, we have a summary of the rest of this important chapter, and an opening to the particular errors relating to the mediation of Christ, to guard against which the apostle had so earnestly desired that they might "come to the full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgment of the mystery of God, and the Father, and of Christ, and might be established, and rooted, and built up in the faith of Christ:" verses 2, 6, 7.

He divides the corrupt doctrines which he is about to condemn into three classes—philosophical speculations; traditions framed merely by man, and flowing from them; and elements or rudiments of the Mosaic dispensation, from which they both took their rise; and he condemns them in the verses before us in common, on four grounds: they are not after Christ; they go to deny "the fulness of the Godhead bodily that dwells in him;" they are inconsistent with the fundamental doctrine of the Epistle, and of the whole Gospel, "that we are complete in him;" and they rob Christ of his office and glory as the "head of all principality and power."

These points, which are briefly touched on in these three

3) Neh. viii. 10.

verses, are resumed in the remainder of the chapter, as we shall see; the several corruptions are more fully opened; and additional grounds of condemnation are laid.

This is the first express mention in our Epistle of the errors the apostle had in view all along in the first chapter, and the beginning of the second; and it demands our especial attention. With the subsequent details, it forms the most graphic picture of “the man of sin,”⁴ as the apostle elsewhere calls the western apostacy, any where to be found in the Bible. Rome is depicted in all her deformity; her principles and practices are described by a heaven-inspired pen; and all the prophecies concerning her in the Old and New Testament are compressed, as we shall see, into a few verses; and all who are in danger of following her, or leaning towards her, are most plainly and solemnly warned.

1. The apostle first speaks of philosophy: *beware lest any man spoil* you through philosophy and vain deceit.* This is an alarm as against a thief covertly approaching in the night. “Take care,” as though the apostle had said, “be on your guard; an enemy is near; keep a constant watch, lest any one make a prey of you and carry you off as his spoil, by heathen and deceitful pretences to philosophy.” For the allusion is to the robber or beast of prey unable to enter the sheepfold by open violence, but attempting it by fraud and cunning; and who is known to be near at hand.

The church is the fold of Christ, the good and great Shepherd, who “gave his life for the sheep;”⁵ the flock are the faithful; the sheepfold in which they are secure is the pure doctrine and ministrations of the true shepherds; the false apostles are robbers, who, being unable to enter by the door, “climb up some other way;” the danger is lest these marauders should by craft get into the fold, and steal some of the flock, and carry them off as a booty; just as the

* The word means, to carry off as a prey—so in verse 20.

4) 2 Thess. ii. 3.

5) John x. 15.

Amalekites, after plundering Ziklag, bore away as their spoil the families and property of David and his people.⁶ "The thief cometh not," said our Lord, "but to kill, and to steal, and to destroy; I am come," he proceeds, "that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly."⁷

By philosophy and vain deceit the apostle does not condemn true and noble philosophy in its proper sphere, which is the love and pursuit of wisdom, and is engaged in the cautious investigation of the works of God, for the honour of the divine Creator and the benefit of man. But he explains what he condemns by the expository words *vain deceit*—a philosophy falsely so called, baseless, dreamy, vainglorious, and meddling with what is above its ken, and not submitted to its award.

What this was we shall see more in detail hereafter. It is sufficient now to say, that all attempts to alter the perfect revelation of Christ, to sit in judgment upon the matters contained in it—to add to it by speculative theories about angels and saints—to bring in the wisdom of this world to interpret and explain away the dictates of divine wisdom, is a *vain deceit*, however dignified with the name of philosophy, beguiling "men with enticing words."

Our apostle solemnly condemns the same false wisdom in his Epistle to the Corinthians, which is a comment on the verse before us. "For it is written," he begins, "I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent,"⁸ that is, the philosophers of the world. Next he indignantly inquires, "Where is the wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the disputer of this world?" designating the precise character of the disputatious leaders of sects in Greece and Rome. "Hath not God," our apostle goes on, "made foolish the wisdom of this world?" "For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness

6) 1 Sam. xxx. 1, 2.

7) John x. 10.

8) 1 Cor. i. 19—24.

of preaching”—that which the philosophers accounted such —“to save them that believe. For the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom.” Thus he divides off, and designates by their appropriate characters, the two chief classes of the corrupters of the faith,—“but we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling-block,”—as we shall presently see,—“and to the Greeks,” the philosophers with whom we are now concerned, “foolishness; but unto us who are saved,” and keep on our guard lest any artfully carry us off from the fold, “Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.”

And in his Epistle to the Romans, our apostle thus opens the vain deceit of philosophy, and denounces the doom passed by the Almighty upon it: “They became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened; professing themselves to be wise,”—philosophers,—“they became fools;” “and as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge,” being “in their minds alienated from him,” by wicked works, “God gave them up to a reprobate mind.”⁹

2. *After the traditions of men*, is the apostle’s second class of corruptions, derived from the first. *Vain deceit* having once possessed the mind, an infinity of mere human traditions, with no pretence to a divine origin, and handed down from age to age, are insensibly accumulated, and at length are formed into a code of observances, austerities, abstinences, superstitious rites, idolatries, from which men hope, after the doctrine of heathen philosophy, mixed with Judaical notions, to overcome the passions and appetites of fallen nature, and attain to the knowledge and fruition of the Deity. These are the baseless human traditions invented by uninspired and unauthorized teachers, imposed upon the neck of the disciples, inconsistent with the liberty of the Gospel, and a sandy foundation for the presumptuous claims of merit before God.

3. *After the rudiments of the world*, is the apostle’s third

⁹ Rom. i. 21—28.

class of errors. We might possibly understand this expression as explanatory of the preceding: *The traditions of men*. But I rather think, from the subsequent course of the apostle's argument, and the resumption there made of the several classes, that he intends the Mosaical rites, of which circumcision was the head and pledge. For he enters immediately upon this topic (verses 11—17) after the passage we are considering. These differed from merely human traditions, because they boasted of a divine origin, and were therefore more likely to seduce the minds of the Gentile converts, when artfully pressed by the Jewish zealots. The philosophical subtleties, also, about angels, which the Jews were too ready to graft, on the suggestion of the heathen doctors, upon the Mosaical revelation, would naturally find a congenial soil in the unstable amongst the Colossians, from their education, association of thoughts, and social habits, before their conversion. From both of these corruptions the purely human traditions followed with a rapid tide. Accordingly, the apostle, in opening afterwards these classes of errors, begins with that which was the most plausible, and which was the basis of them all—the Mosaic rites: verses 11—17; then he goes on to vain philosophy: verses 18 and 19; and lastly, comes to the offspring of both, which would bring them back to a worse yoke than the ceremonial law—human traditions, with a show of wisdom, a pretended humility, and an uncommanded neglect of the body: verses 20—23.

So that the general heathen philosophy about demons, angels, and saints, may be described as taking two courses, turning off, as it were, into two roads—its first and main path was the Mosaic rites, as having had originally a divine authority, and being in full possession of the Jewish mind—its second tract was austerities, fastings, celibacy, &c., without any pretence to God's command; and the three threatened the overthrow of the Gospel, especially as to the capital doctrine of the completeness of Christ's mediation, founded on the blood of his cross.

I understand, therefore, by *the rudiments of the world*, both here and in verse 20, what the apostle evidently does in Gal. iv. 3, 9, 10, “Even so we, when we were children, were in bondage under the elements of the world,” (margin, rudiments,) “but now, after that ye have known God, or rather are known of God, how turn ye again to the weak and beggarly elements, whereunto ye desire to be in bondage?” Here the Mosaic ceremonies and rites are clearly intended, which were in themselves an earthly, external, introductory religion; shadows at best, and in their first state; gendering to bondage through the corruption of the human heart; and, if separated from Christ, and thrust on the consciences of men, now they were abolished, “weak and beggarly elements,” and nothing more.

And I am inclined to think that the main danger from the three errors in the circumstances of the Colossians, was *the vain philosophy*, though not the most seductive in the first instance; which the turn of the apostle’s language, also, seems to me to intimate. *Beware lest any one make a spoil of you through—δύ—by means of philosophy*; here the general corruption is stated, whether it turn off to the *traditions of men*, and be *κατά*, after, according to them, or *the rudiments of the world*.

Here, then, let us stop and reflect on the divine warning and exhortation. Let us “walk in Christ,” and let us “beware of seducing teachers.” This is what India wants; a steady walk: establishment in the faith of Christ; roots deeply fixed in him; the goodly building resting wholly upon him; with due reverence for ministers, and gratitude to Almighty God for all his benefits. Thus we should grow constantly in grace; should stand unmoved and unhurt amidst those dangers and assaults which the apostle describes; yea, should be strengthened and more firmly rooted in Christ by the very storms and trials which burst over us; as the sturdy oak, around whose base the earth is loosened, has its roots fixed more deeply in the soil by the agitation of the wintry blast.

LECTURE XVI.

CHRIST THE FULNESS OF THE GODHEAD BODILY—BELIEVERS
COMPLETE IN HIM.

COL. ii. 9, 10.

OUR apostle now proceeds to the four general grounds on which he condemns in common the three classes of error which he had briefly described.

1. They are “not after Christ;” (verse 8;) they were not in keeping with his religion; not agreeable to, nor connected with, nor according to Christ. They were “after the traditions of men;” or they were “after,” they were according to, “the rudiments of the world,” as they were all worked in “through” and by means of “philosophy and vain deceit;” but, whatever they were, they were neither through nor after Christ.

There is a tone and character in the Christian doctrine peculiar to itself. This arises from the views which it inculcates of the fall and guilt of man; of its astonishing scheme of redemption, by “the mystery of God and the Father, and of Christ;” of the contrite and tender heart which it requires; of the deep humility and implicit faith with which it is to be received, and the heavenly life and abstraction from the world which it breathes. These cannot consist with the pride of a vagrant imagination, or with the officious intermeddling of philosophical speculations, or with the yoke of human commandments and a “worldly sanctuary.”¹ Christianity is a system peculiar and distinct from every other; it is the religion of a broken-hearted sinner ingrafted into Christ, receiving Christ, walking in him, knowing no wisdom but his, “rooted and built up and established” in Christ. These human inventions are of another

1) Heb. ix. 2.

school ; they are “not after Christ ;” they may be after the Jewish zealots, or fanatical teachers of ceremonies ; they may be after the Pythagoreans or Platonists ; they may be after Moses and his abrogated law ; but they are “not after Christ ;” they savour not the things of Christ ; they puff up the mind with conceit ; they fix the affections on false objects ; they draw off from that attachment to Christ and reliance upon him which is essential to Christianity ; they bring in other mediators. There is no kind of affinity between Christ and them. They are antagonist powers ; the substances will not amalgamate. As we cannot by any process turn brass into gold, so we cannot improve and raise up vain philosophy into Christianity ; we cannot be living to human inventions, and at the same time be living to Christ.

9. *For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.*

This most sublime and striking declaration demands our utmost attention, especially as brought forward as a general argument against the three classes of errors before us. For to render philosophy mean and contemptible, to show traditions to be useless and impious, to dissipate for ever the shadows of the Mosaic law, “the sun of righteousness” has only to shine forth. His glory eclipses the flickering lights of human folly.

In Christ dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. Fulness is a term used by the Hebrews to signify all that any thing contains. Thus, “The earth is the Lord’s, and the fulness thereof,” “the fulness of the sea shall be turned unto thee ;” the church is “Christ’s body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all.”² In a similar sense, we say of Adam, that there was in him all the fulness of humanity, that is, whatever is contained in the creature man.

In Christ, then, *the fulness of the Godhead* means all the perfections, attributes, and qualities which compose and fill,

²) Eph. i. 23.

as it were, the divine nature—the rich and incomprehensible abundance of the perfections with which this supreme and adorable nature is replete; as self-existence, sovereignty, omnipresence, omnipotence, eternity, and other properties in the Deity; and which are all necessary in order to the appropriation of the name; for they in whom they are wanting are only called Gods falsely or improperly, as heathen idols, magistrates, &c.; as the context of the passages in each case proves. But we have in Christ *all the fulness of the Godhead*, in the most proper and strict sense; all the perfections, attributes, power, wisdom, eternity, self-existence, omnipresence, truth, holiness; so that “whatever we believe of the glory of the Father, that we believe of the glory of the Son, without any difference or inequality.”

The heathen deities only pretended to some few divine attributes in a modified degree; some gifts of the supreme God; some portion of divinity. But here we have *all the fulness of the Godhead*, which the philosophers knew nothing of, and therefore could not describe, much less claim for their gods. The powers and ranks of angels were still more contemptible, in the comparison with this transcendent fulness of deity in Christ.

The Jews boasted of their types and shadows, their sacrifices, their temples, their high priest; but these contained not *the fulness of the Godhead*, and did not pretend to do so.

Even their shechinah, or visible glory, was lost to the second temple—it no longer hovered over the ark of the covenant. And though it was no doubt for a time a symbol of present deity to the Jews; yet it was no more, it was a symbol only.

And this is probably the reason of the apostle's adding the word *bodily* to this sublime description before us. *In Christ dwelleth*, abideth permanently, resideth for ever, never to remove, never to depart, *all the fulness of the Godhead*—and this—*bodily*, substantially, manifestly, as in a temple; not by a visible, material, shadowy splendour, but substan-

tially and really; for Christ exercised in human nature all divine attributes, performed all divine works, and communicated all divine blessings to man, through the astonishing and incomprehensible union of the divine and human natures in his one person.

God had often exhibited himself to men, but only in part; only in the creatures; only by his power and grace; but now the *Λόγος* or Eternal Word, which “was in the beginning with God, and was God,” dwells, and dwells *bodily*, truly, completely, and without a figure, in the human nature of Christ as God-man. We have all the fulness of present Deity in him. So that when he “was made flesh and dwelt”—tabernacled, pitched his tent, and abode—“amongst us,”—“we beheld his glory;”—not a natural glory, as of the Shechinah, but spiritual and divine, “as of the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.”³

10. *And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power.*

3. And all this was for our complete salvation, as the apostle proceeds to infer, *and ye are complete in him*. The word *complete* is emphatic—it is of the same import and derivation as what is generally rendered* by our translators “fulfilled.” To be complete in Christ is to be accomplished, finished, supplied, as from an infinite source, with all blessings in him. The breach of our nature is completely and in all respects repaired. We are like empty vessels in ourselves; but we are filled up to the brim, so to speak, in him, and have no room for a drop of the wisdom of philosophy falsely so called, the traditions of erring men, or the abrogated ceremonies of Moses. As there is an original and divine fulness of the Godhead in Christ, so there is a derived fulness communicated to us. We are quite filled and completed by the

* *πλήρωμα, πεπληρωμένοι.*

3) John i. 14, 15.

fulness of the Godhead in Christ, who is “made of God to us wisdom and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption.”⁴

And so the apostle John, in the verse following those I have cited, goes on to speak of this communicated fulness; “and of his fulness,” as God-man, tabernacling amongst us, “have all we received, and grace for grace;”⁵ large and continually increasing supplies and flowings of grace from him. And thus St. Paul, in the first chapter, after his description of Christ as “the image of the invisible God,” the creator and conservator of all things, and the reconciler by the blood of his cross, proceeds, as we have seen, to open the channels of this ocean of grace to us; “and he is the head of the body, the church; that in all things he might have the pre-eminence; for it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness”—for our complete supply—“dwell.”

And again in this chapter, after speaking of “the mystery of Christ” as one with the Father, and of the “riches of the full assurance of understanding” of that mystery, he proceeds to the communication of all this fulness to us; “In him are hid”—for our use and advantage—“all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge”—subjoining the all-important caution, “and this I say lest any man beguile you with enticing words.”

4. To shut out all possibility of mistake, however, the apostle further states, *Who is the head of all principality and power*; that is, of all the angelic hierarchies concerning whom he had before said, “By Christ were all things created that are in heaven and earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones or dominions, or principalities or powers.” The worship, therefore, of angels and saints, of dead men and women, of the highest archangel himself, was idolatry; and the pretence of making them mediators, either of redemption or intercession, together with Christ, was an insult to “the fulness of the Godhead” in him. All the an-

4) 1 Cor. i. 30.

5) John i. 15.

gelic world is placed under him ; “angels, and principalities, and powers are made subject to him ;”⁶ he is their Creator, their Chief, their Lord, their Master. They go at his bidding to “minister to the heirs of salvation.”⁷ He is their head as to empire, sovereignty, and confirmation in holiness and bliss ; just as he is, in a stricter sense, the “head of his body the church,” as to union and communication of the pardoning and sanctifying benefits of his salvation “by the blood of his cross” and the operations of his Spirit.

Here, then, are the general but decisive grounds of the condemnation of the three classes of errors briefly enumerated by the apostles. 1. They are “not after Christ.” 2. They deny “the fulness of the Godhead which dwelt bodily in him.” 3. They imply that we are still incomplete, and need something to supply our wants. 4. They suppose that “principalities and powers” are not subject to him.

But all these suppositions are intolerable. The scheme of the Gospel came from the hands of the Almighty, as all his works, perfect and complete ; full, adequate, contrived with infinite wisdom for all the ends of the divine glory and human necessities. To add to it, is to mar the whole ; is to misunderstand the entire design ; is to “trample underfoot the Son of God, and put him to an open shame ;”⁸ is to lose our own souls. I have already more than once noted that the expression, *Ye are complete in him*, is one of the summaries of the whole Epistle. And the pregnant import of this phrase seems to me to be especially directed against the error which the apostle places first in the words before us, “Philosophy and vain deceit ;” an attempt to “beguile men with enticing words,” and carry unstable souls off as a prey to false objects of worship, and dependence for mediatorial grace ; inferring that they were incomplete in Christ. The Mosaic errors gave occasion to this false scheme, as we shall see ; but the wisdom of this world, dreams and speculations of the fallen mind about religion, baseless reasonings on the nature

6) 1 Pet. iii. 22.

7) Heb i. 14.

8) Heb. vi. 6.

of angels, unsupported by revelation, appear to have most fixed the apostle's attention. All stood upon a false philosophy. So it is with popery in every age; the endless speculations of the schoolmen; sophistry with its cobweb distinctions; baseless systems of mediation by angels, and archangels, and saints, are its instruments of confounding truth with error; many other false principles being combined.

Beware, then, brethren. Let not the inventions of Plato or Pythagoras, Aristotle or Epictetus, of the scholastic divines or the Tridentine fathers, draw you away from Christ, "In whom dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily." And, mark the words once more; *Ye are complete in him*;—in him, in Christ, not in the church; not in a feigned apostolical succession; not in external forms; not in sacraments; but in him, and him only, you have "all fulness," ye are filled up and completed, as to all the parts of salvation, in Christ.

Means, indeed, the ministry of the word, the sacraments, and a godly discipline, must be used in their place with reverence. Apostolic order must have its portion of regard, as well as apostolic doctrine; as St. Paul enjoins in this Epistle, and in every other part of his inspired writings; but they must be kept quite subordinate to Christ; they must be treated only as means, and channels, and instruments in his hands.

If they are made prominent; if faith is directed to them; if their position is exaggerated and their effects overstated, then Christ is to us incomplete, the church is made his rival; sacraments are usurpers; ministers are traitors; the servant supersedes his lord; philosophy takes the place of the Gospel, and human "traditions," worse than the old Mosaic ceremonies, hide and darken the glory of him "in whom dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily." And if a system is built up in a course of ages out of all this, and the secular power brought in to enforce it, then full-blown popery stands confessed before us in all its idolatry and blasphemy.

All depends on the relative importance we attach to things. What we most press on the notice of our people, that they will most regard. The minds of men are very narrow, and will not admit of many objects at a time. Let, then, Christ fill the eye, the heart, the tongue, the whole soul; and every thing will sink in comparison with him. But if external rites are magnified and made prominent and perpetually inculcated, and there is no time nor heart left for preaching fully and faithfully Christ the Lord, we build on a sandy foundation, and our edifice will fall.

Let us pray, then, for an affecting and just view of our natural corruption and alienation from God. Next, let us pray for faith, divine, simple faith, which receives "the record which God hath given of his Son;" then, as preparatory and introductory to this, let us seek for "the riches of the full assurance of understanding in the mystery of Christ."⁹

When this is done, and the gigantic truth of Christ, "the fulness of the Godhead bodily," opens with all its glory upon the penitent and contrite soul, the foggy mists of false philosophy, and the dark clouds of tradition, and the faint shadows of Moses, will disappear in the blaze of the bright and glorious day. All will be light. Vain philosophy will hide its head; the commandments of men sink into night, and Moses be eclipsed and vanish away.

And for this "faith once delivered to the saints," we must "earnestly contend,"¹⁰ and, if need be, suffer. Controversy in itself is bad and unwholesome to the soul; but if we cannot get at Christ without clearing away the false reasonings and usages which interfere between us and him, we must, like the noble army of Reformers, prefer controversy with truth, to peace with cowardice and treachery. The wells stopped and clogged by our spiritual foe must be opened again, that the thirsty flocks may drink and live.

No wonder the apostle took such wide and strong ground at the commencement of his Epistle, in his first chapter and

9) 1 John v. 10.

10) Jude 3.

the beginning of this, in order to prepare for the grand attack now before us, and continued, as we shall see, in the subsequent verse. The importance of the case demanded it. Let us follow his authoritative example. Let us first "receive Christ Jesus the Lord, and walk in him; rooted, and built up, and established in the faith as we have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving;" and then let us, also, "beware of the enticing words of man's wisdom," attempting to mend and supply, what God has left complete and entire—"Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God." Let us listen to no pretended "philosophy." Let us follow no uncommanded "traditions." Let us re-admit none of the "rudiments of the world." Let us reject at once, and as by instinct, all that is "not after Christ," and that flows not from that ocean and "fulness of the Godhead bodily," which dwelleth, and is deposited for our use in him; and let us be content with Christ alone, and use the overwhelming discovery for all the ends for which we find it employed in the other part of this Epistle, with holy gratitude, meekness, wisdom, and love.

LECTURE XVII.

CONDEMNATION OF JUDAIZING ERROR—SPIRITUAL CIRCUMCISION.

COL. ii. 11.

OUR apostle having condemned briefly the three classes of errors beginning to prevail at Colosse, and having again asserted the glory and fulness of Christ as Mediator, proceeds now to condemn them more solemnly and at greater length; and to contrast the real method of sanctification

which the Gospel enjoins, with the superstitious schemes and inventions of men.

This decisive and most important judgment occupies a considerable part of the remainder of the Epistle. It extends over seventeen verses—from the present verse, the eleventh, of the second chapter, to the fourth of the following one.

If I am right in the view taken in the last lecture of the scope of the apostle's reasoning, it centres in the condemnation which he pronounces on *the worship of angels* with its attendant *will-worship*, and intrusion into the invisible world; which the prescient mind of the inspired writer probably foresaw, would be the head and front of the great apostasy of the church.

And the entrance to all this saint-worship having been made by means of the Judaizing doctors, and their adherence to the divinely-appointed, but now abolished, Mosaic economy, St. Paul begins with circumcision, its grand peculiarity and the initiatory sacrament of God's covenant of mercy, and its supercession by baptism, verses 11, 12.

He then comes down to the actual and individual case of the Colossians, and reminds them of their having been quickened to a spiritual life, in consequence of the completeness of Christ's redemption, though uncircumcised, verse 13.

Next he proceeds to demolish root and branch, the whole frame-work of legal observances, human schemes of mediation and superstitious austerities, by a sublime description of the triumph of Christ upon the cross, by which the whole record of the believer's obligation to punishment was blotted out, access to God thrown wide open to the whole race of mankind, and the very *principalities and powers* which the false teachers turned into an occasion of idolatry, led captive and exhibited to an astonished world, verses 14, 15.

Having thus cleared his way to the specific condemnation of the three classes of false doctrines, the apostle finishes

first with that which immediately sprung from the ceremonial law and had originally a divine appointment, verses 16, 17.

He comes then to his main judgment upon angel-worship, verses 18, 19.

And goes on, next, to the austerities imposed by men, whether of a Mosaical character in the additions of the Scribes and Pharisees, or of a philosophical, by the inventions of teachers unconnected with the Jewish economy, verses 20—23.

Having thus sentenced the three divisions of unsound doctrines which impugned our Lord's full mediation, St. Paul concludes this part of his Epistle by showing how truly we are *complete in Christ* as to sanctification, as well as justification, by an elevated description of the gospel method of holiness in our rising with Christ from an earthly religion and all earthly things; (c. iii. 1;) setting our supreme love on things above, where he was sitting, as sole Mediator, at the right hand of God, (verse 2,) and humbly waiting the time when we should at length *appear with him in glory*, perfectly justified and sanctified, notwithstanding all the darkness and confusion created by false apostles: verses 3, 4.

11. *In whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ.*

The corrupt teachers, both of Jewish and heathen origin, insinuated that the Colossians could not be "complete in Christ," as the only Mediator, because they were Gentiles, and could have no introduction into the covenant of grace, no insertion, no incorporation, without circumcision.

The apostle, therefore, having first laid a firm ground by asserting, as we have seen, verses 9, 10, that in Christ "dwelt all the fulness of the Godhead bodily;" and that they were "complete in Him, who was the Head of all principality and power," adds now, as the important inference, that in

him also they had a better circumcision, even that made without hands, by the spiritual and Almighty power of Christ; and that this introduced them into the covenant of the Messiah with all its benefits, in a far better manner than the old Mosaic ordinance. The grand obstacle of their being "aliens and strangers" was thus removed. They had indeed been "far off," but were "brought nigh by the blood of Christ;" and were made "fellow citizens of the saints and of the household of God."¹

This proved that they had in this respect, as well as every other, all that they could need in Christ; and to insist on the bodily circumcision of Moses, now that it was abrogated, was not only useless, but foreign from Christ, implied the imperfection of his sacrifice, and opposed the spiritual circumcision which he wrought in men by his Spirit.

And if this were so, then the whole legal economy, with all its enactments, though originally of divine authority, was abolished, accomplished, and superseded. For "he that was circumcised was a debtor to do the whole law."² It was the first of a continued series of observances and rites typical of the sacrifice and mediation of the future Messiah. If circumcision, then, under the gospel is performed in a high and spiritual manner, "not by the hands of man," but of Christ himself; not on the body of the convert, but upon his soul and affections, then the entire foundation on which the false teachers built was cut away from under them, and Christ must be confessed to be exclusively our Redeemer, Mediator, and Sanctifier, in whom "all fulness dwelt;" and from whom it was to be derived for the purposes of salvation by the Colossians, and all other Christian converts.

Besides, circumcision was not properly a part of the law of Moses; it was instituted 430 years before. "To Abraham and his seed were the promises" which were sealed by it "made;" and this "covenant that was confirmed before of God in Christ, the law" of Moses, which came so long after-

1) Eph. ii. 12. 19.

2) Gal. v. 3.

wards, could “not disannul, that it should make the promise of none effect”³—nor did it; on the contrary, the *circumcision of Christ* upon the hearts of the Gentile sinners, introduced them into the covenant of grace made to Abraham, with infinitely greater advantages than the bodily ceremony could do, either as observed by Abraham, or as made the pledge and bond of the whole of the national covenant mediated so many years after by Moses.

But let us follow our apostle in the verse before us. The general nature of circumcision is well known. It exhibited to the Jews the necessity of the purification of their defiled and corrupted nature by the abolition and cutting off of sin, the eradication of their inbred lusts, and the implantation of new principles of love to God and obedience to his commandments and ordinances.

It was also the appointed entrance into the covenant of grace; gave the partaker of it a share in all promises of pardon, acceptance, and salvation, made in the “seed of the woman,” and entitled him to the privileges of access to God in his service on earth, whether before or after the law, and to the glorious inheritance of heaven hereafter.

In a word, it represented the circumcision of the heart, “to love the Lord our God;” was an effectual sign of grace; and was a seal of “the righteousness of faith” in the future Messiah, “which Abraham had being yet uncircumcised.”⁴

It is common now with the divines against whose insidious but fatal system I am desirous to guard you, to undervalue the spiritual blessings of circumcision under the Old Testament, and the grace conveyed and sealed by it, in order to over-estimate the blessings of baptism under the New. To this end they consider the most devout servants of God of old as still left without that change of heart and renewal of the whole soul which might entitle them to be considered, as what the New Testament terms, “regenerate,” or “born of the Spirit.”

3) Gal. iii. 17.

4) Rom. iv. 12.

A more unsound statement can scarcely be conceived; and, as it lies at the foundation of the erroneous system they are propagating on the subject of baptism, we must pause to consider the case; in fact, it extends through the entire body of their doctrines to the remotest ramification.

Circumcision of old, as baptism now, implied "a death unto sin, and a new birth unto righteousness;" it gave an entrance into the church and kingdom of God; it was the initiatory sacrament; it set forth the washing away the guilt and pollution of sin, and a dedication to God through the promised Messiah; and it brought with it, when rightly administered and received, the grace and power of the quickening Spirit of God. The spiritual devotions of the Book of Psalms are sufficient to prove this.

The clearer discovery of the Persons of the adorable Trinity, and of the sacrifice of Christ under the New Testament, and the more copious influences of the Holy Spirit, make no difference whatever as to the characteristics of each introductory sacrament; that is, as to the persons entitled to partake of it, the nature of the grace it conveyed, the covenant into which it engrafted them, and the obligations of *putting off the body of the sins of the flesh* which it imposed. All was substantially the same.

Read the inspired language of both Testaments in reference to circumcision. "The Lord thy God will circumcise thine heart, to love the Lord thy God."⁵ "And Moses spake, saying, How shall Pharaoh hearken unto me, who am of uncircumcised lips?"⁶ "Circumcise yourselves unto the Lord, and take away the foreskin of your hearts."⁷ "Circumcise the foreskin of your hearts, and be no more stiff-necked."⁸ "Behold, their ear is uncircumcised, and they cannot hearken." "Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will punish all them which are circumcised with the uncircumcised. Egypt, and Judah, and Edom, and the children of Ammon and Moab, and all that are in the utmost corners

5) Deut. xxx. 6.

6) Exod. vi. 12.

7) Jer. iv. 4.

8) Deut. x. 16.

that dwell in the wilderness ; for all these nations are uncircumcised, and all the house of Israel are uncircumcised in the heart.”⁹ Nothing can be more decisive as to the spiritual blessings of circumcision, the duties to which it bound men, and the danger of confounding “the outward and visible sign” with “the inward and spiritual grace,” and of inferring in all cases the one from the other.

All these passages bear with their full force on the subject of baptism, as I shall show in the next lecture.

But to proceed in order ; let us now notice the language of the apostles at the first planting of the Gospel, as to circumcision and the blessings it conveyed. “In Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing nor uncircumcision, but a new creature.”¹⁰ “We are the circumcision who worship God in the Spirit and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh.”¹¹ “Ye stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost ; as your fathers did, so do ye.”¹² “He is not a Jew who is one outwardly, neither is that circumcision which is outward in the flesh ; but he is a Jew who is one inwardly ; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter ; whose praise is not of men, but of God.”¹³

In these two sets of passages, all the points essential to a scriptural view of the initiatory sacraments of the old and new dispensation are marked as with a sunbeam. They are substantially the same ; the spiritual obligations imposed by them the same ; the “righteousness of faith” sealed, the same. So also the inward grace set forth and conveyed ; the attestation made by a public reception into the church ; and a covenant-right to pardon and eternal salvation signed and sealed. The disjunction, also, at times, of the spiritual blessings from the outward sign is solemnly declared ; and the necessity in such cases of those spiritual blessings being

9) Jer. vi. 10 ; ix. 25. 26.

10) Gal. vi. 15.

11) Phil. iii. 3.

12) Acts vii. 51.

13) Rom. ii. 28, 29.

sought for in all their extent, after circumcision or baptism, from the grace of the Holy Spirit in the use of means, proclaimed as with a trumpet's voice.

Circumcision, indeed, like baptism, was the one only visible seal of the covenant, and not to be repeated; but much less was it, on the other hand, to be relied on, unless the actual spiritual transformation appeared in the heart and life of the recipient. And the larger measures of the Holy Spirit under the New Testament, and the opening of the Gospel to the Gentile world, made no difference as to the essential characteristics of the two ordinances.

All this is abundantly confirmed by the language of our apostle in the verse we are considering, and the two subsequent ones, verses 12 and 13, as we shall see hereafter.

In whom also (in Christ) ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands. This latter expression, *without hands*, marks the superior excellency and the greater degree of spirituality of the Gospel circumcision. Similar expressions frequently occur: "We have a building of God," says our apostle, in another place, "a house not made with hands,"¹⁴ that is, more admirable and permanent than any earthly abode. "Christ came by a greater and more perfect tabernacle not made with hands." "Christ is not entered into the holy place made with hands."¹⁵

The meaning is plain. The circumcision of the true convert is *made without hands*, is performed in a more excellent and spiritual manner; not by the hand of man, but by the Spirit of God; not partially upon the body, but upon the whole soul; not in "the oldness of the letter," to which alone too many of the Jews looked, "but in the newness of the spirit."¹⁵

And so the apostle goes on to explain himself, *In putting off the body of the sins of the flesh.* It consisted in putting off, spurning, renouncing, casting away with disgust, *the body of the sins of the flesh*, of our fallen nature, of the defiled and

14) 2 Cor. v. 1.

15) Heb. ix. 24.

16) Rom. vii. 6.

corrupt tendencies which we bring with us into the world, "the flesh with its affections and lusts," "the old man" with all his "members which are upon the earth;" and it consisted, also, in "putting on the new man," "which, after God, is created in righteousness and true holiness," as the apostle elsewhere speaks; or, as he says in the next verse, the being "quickened with Christ," and raised from the tomb and death of sin by his grace, in virtue and after the example of his own glorious resurrection.

This may well be called *the circumcision of Christ*, because it supersedes the external form of the circumcision of the law, and fulfils all its spiritual designs, in a far more perfect manner than even the spiritually minded Jew could adequately conceive.

Still, though the grace, as we have said, was more copious, the substance of the Abrahamic sacrament was the same as the Christian; just as the passover was substantially the same as the supper of the Lord. The characteristics remain.

But we return to the apostle's argument. He maintains that the admission into the covenant of God's mercy under the Gospel was complete by *this circumcision of Christ*. No additions from any quarter were admissible. What the moral law could not do; nor the Mosaical ceremonies; nor philosophical inventions, that, *the circumcision of Christ* effected. The moral law could only open the wound, but not cure it. The Mosaical circumcision, with all its framework of a typical economy, now that it was abolished, could only be an external and useless infliction. Philosophy was so far from being able to heal the disease of a fallen nature, that it was not even acquainted with it.

But *the circumcision made without hands* mortifies the whole body of sin, quickens and renews the soul, and "brings" the converts "nigh" to a reconciled God and Father "by the blood of Christ."

Here, then, we close for the present. Let us each ear-

nestly adopt the prayer of our church, which precisely confirms the view I have taken ; “ that God would grant us the true circumcision of the Spirit, that our hearts and all our members, being mortified from all worldly and carnal lusts, we may in all things obey his blessed will through Jesus Christ our Lord !”*

LECTURE XVIII.

CHRISTIAN BAPTISM—REGENERATION.

COL. ii. 12.

12. *Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead.*

THE apostle now expressly introduces, as the next important step in his argument, the initiatory sacrament of the New Testament. This he does without explanation. He seems to consider baptism as coming in the place of circumcision as a matter of course. Nothing need be said ; it was a thing well known from the first throughout the Christian churches.

For as “ the circumcision made without hands,” and the access to the covenant of mercy thrown open thereby to all nations followed naturally from the completeness of Christ’s sufferings and mediation ; so baptism followed with it, and took at once the position of circumcision ; was applicable to the same persons ; conveyed the same grace, only in a much larger measure ; and imposed the same kind of obligations, augmented by the superior dignity and value of Christ.

* Collect for the Circumcision.

In what the apostle here states, he appears to meet an objection. For the false teachers might ask, "Why do you abolish circumcision under pretence of the spiritual grace of Christ? Was not Abraham spiritually circumcised? and yet the sign was added."

To this St. Paul virtually replies, "We do not consider a sign unnecessary. We have a sacrament under the Gospel answering to circumcision, administered to the same subjects, the faithful and their seed; representing and sealing the like blessings, and obliging to similar duties. To retain circumcision, then, as now necessary to salvation, would be to alter the order and dispensation of Christ, to open the door to a flood of human inventions, and to deny the perfection of our Lord's sacrifice and high priesthood as the only Mediator of the new covenant.

"And our initiatory Christian sacrament," the apostle may be supposed to add, "is more adapted to the spiritual and universal economy of the Gospel than the Jewish; as being performed without shedding the blood of the convert or of his seed; as of easier application in all parts of the world; and literally applicable to both divisions of the human family; so that in "Christ Jesus" there is now, in this as well as other senses, "neither male nor female."

Here the apostle begins his application of the doctrine of circumcision to the New Testament ordinance—and here we must give the closest attention; for a controversy now opens. The question is, Whether the full spiritual blessings of baptism are conveyed invariably and in all cases to infants at the time of their receiving it, so that we may then say they are as truly "born of God" as adults coming with repentance and faith undoubtedly are; or whether we must consider the full blessings to be dependent on the right administration and reception, by their believing parents and representatives, of the sacrament; and wait for their own actual and personal repentance and belief, before we declare them absolutely to be

partakers of a new spiritual and moral change of nature ; always hoping, as charity prescribes, that such change has begun till the contrary appears.

The expression *buried with him in baptism* alludes to the ancient form of administering that sacred ordinance still directed in our own church, except when health forbids, of the immersion or burial, so to speak, of the whole person in the water, after the example of the burial of the entire body of our Lord in the grave.

The import of the expression is, perhaps, rather stronger than the similar terms of “dying to sin,” of “being crucified with Christ,” and of “putting off the old man with his deeds.” It implies the permanent and entire mortification of the body of sin, the abiding reign and dominion of that figurative death, and the final cessation of all the feelings, acts, and pursuits of “the old man ;” just as the person of our Lord, when deposited in the tomb, ceased from all the sensibilities and perceptions of ordinary life, and remained in the state of the dead.

In what sense this can be said to take place, under different circumstances and in various degrees, in baptism, we shall see immediately. The close connexion of the spiritual blessing with the outward sign is, however, quite obvious at once, and is, in the first place, to be most carefully observed. So in other passages, “As many as have been baptized into Christ, have put on Christ.”¹ “We are buried with him by baptism into death.”² “Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot see the kingdom of God.”³ “According to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Ghost.”⁴ “Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of the Lord Jesus, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.” “Arise and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord.”⁵ “But ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified, in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit

1) Gal. iii. 17.

2) Rom. vi. 4.

3) John iii. 5.

4) Tit. iii. 5.

5) Acts ii. 38 : xxii. 16.

of our God.”⁶ “That he might sanctify and cleanse it” (the church) “with the washing of water by the word.”⁷ *

Let us next notice that in every one of these and other passages describing the administration of baptism, the inward spiritual change of the fallen heart of man from ignorance, obduracy, and rebellion against God, to some beginnings of knowledge, penitence and spiritual life, was begun before the sacrament was received. There was in each case, “Repentance whereby they forsook sin, and faith whereby they believed the promises of God made to them in that sacrament,” according to what our catechism admirably teaches as “required of persons to be baptized,” and our adult office expressly supposes to be present in those who come to receive that holy sacrament. For the cases described in the New Testament are, from the circumstances of the time, those of grown-up converts. We have no details whatever of that of infants in the Acts of the Apostles nor in the Epistles; though the divine authority for baptizing them with their believing parents is always taken for granted; there the case is quite clear, as I shall soon show. But as to the blessings received, we argue from analogy only, and from the general promises of Christ. Some difficulties, therefore, may remain; for on the grace of the sacraments, when pursued into their details even as to adults, difficulties, as on most other topics of theology, may always be raised, whilst the main practical questions stand out bold and clear; and I rather think the omission of details as to the actual blessings received in baptism at the time by infants, is in order to leave every thing dependent on their subsequent repentance and faith.

Wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead.

The apostle here amplifies the grace which we receive in

* These and similar passages fully justify, and indeed require, the language of our offices.

6) 1 Cor. vi. 11.

7) Eph. v. 26.

Christ. We are not only "planted in the likeness of Christ's death, but also of his resurrection." We are not only "dead with Christ, but we believe we shall also live with him;" or, as our apostle speaks in the next verse, v. 13, "We being dead in our sins and the uncircumcision of our flesh, are quickened together with Christ."

The instrument by which this is effected is faith—*through faith of the operation of God who raised Christ from the dead*—that is, faith fixed on the mighty power of God exerted and displayed in the resurrection of Christ from the tomb; or, as our apostle speaks when writing to the Ephesians, "on the exceeding greatness of his power to usward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, which he wrought in Christ when he raised him from the dead."⁸

This is most diligently to be observed. So in all the passages already cited describing the administration of baptism, the stress is laid on the "faith," the "repentance," the "calling on the name of the Lord," "the word." In like manner in other texts. "For we are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus."⁹ "If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest" (be baptized). "As many as gladly receive his word," i. e. believed the Gospel, "were baptized."¹⁰ "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not" (baptism being omitted in the second clause as a comparatively subordinate thing) "shall be damned."¹¹ "Baptism doth now save us, not the putting away the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience towards God."¹² Faith is, then, the grand instrument of receiving the blessings set forth in baptism. This is the key to the controversy.

We next observe, that the spiritual birth or the transformation of man, in an incipient manner, into "the image of God," is not always strictly connected in Holy Scripture with baptism. It is frequently referred to the word of the

8) Eph. i. 19, 20.

9) Gal. iii. 26.

10) Acts viii. 37; ii. 41.

11) Mark. xvi. 16.

12) 1 Pet. iii. 21.

Gospel on which the faith of the convert rests, either as read, or as urged upon his conscience by the preaching of apostles and evangelists, or as impressed by the Holy Spirit by means of sharp afflictions. "We are born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God—which by the Gospel is preached unto us."¹³ "In Christ Jesus have I begotten you through the Gospel." "Begotten again to a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead." "Having received the word," i. e. believed the Gospel, "with much affliction." "When ye received the word of God," i. e. believed it, "ye received it, not as the word of men, but as it is, in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe."¹⁴ The word of God received by faith is the chief means of the change represented, sealed and completed in baptism.

In the mean time, God is distinctly and most expressly, and without reference especially to this sacrament, declared to be the Author of the mighty blessing. "It is God that worketh in you to will and to do of his good pleasure."¹⁵ "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights," who "begat us of his own will with the word of truth."¹⁶ "Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God."¹⁷ This is a decisive and fundamental point.

We are further taught that the operations of the Holy Spirit are not tied to any particular means, though ordinarily working by them: "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh nor whither it goeth; so is every one that is born of the Spirit;"¹⁸ and this is said with reference to baptism; implying, as it should seem, that the blessing may be granted before the sacrament, or at the time of its administration, or after.

13) 1 Pet. i. 23.

16) James i. 17, 18.

14) 1 Thess. i. 6; ii. 13.

17) John i. 13.

15) Phil. ii. 13.

18) John iii. 8.

It is very material to observe, again, that the apostle when citing, as well as the prophet in predicting, the grand covenant-promise of the New Testament, makes no reference whatever to baptism; "This is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel, saith the Lord, I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts; and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people."¹⁹ Here is a new spirit, a new birth promised as the peculiarity of the Gospel dispensation.

Nor is there any apparent allusion to baptism in the most important corresponding promise made by the Lord by the mouth of Ezekiel; "A new heart also will I give you and a new spirit will I put within you; and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and give you an heart of flesh."²⁰ *

We observe, in the next place, that the possible disjunction of the "outward and visible sign" from the "inward and spiritual grace," as shown, with regard to circumcision, in the last lecture, here comes in as with a flood. The bearing of all these series of passages is decisive. Every text then cited has a tenfold force under the spiritual dispensation of the Gospel.

It should appear, therefore, that we may now go on a step further, and illustrate the one sacrament of the New Testament by the other. For as union with Christ and the feeding upon him by faith, and the eating of his body and blood are not confined to the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, though ordinarily connected with it and visibly manifested to the church by it alone; so the birth of the Spirit is not confined to the actual administration of the sacrament of baptism, though, in like manner, ordinarily connected with it, and visibly testified and made known to the church only by its means.

* The "sprinkling" of the preceding verse seems to allude to the typical and ceremonial washings; as in Isa. lii. 15; Heb. ix. 13; 1 Pet. i. 2.

19) Jer. xxxi. 31—34. Heb. viii. 10—12.

20) Ezek. xxxvi. 26.

Thus far our ground seems perfectly good. God is the Author of the new nature in man, working by faith in his word, by various means, and amongst them eminently in holy baptism.

The sense, then, in which our apostle says that the Colossian converts were *buried with Christ in baptism*, and in which the other texts I have quoted ascribe all the first blessings of salvation to the due participation of this sacrament, is clear and undoubted. They proceed on the supposition that the initiatory sacrament is duly administered and received, and that the parties are sincere in their previous profession of repentance and faith.* The new birth is most properly said to take place in baptism, because it is there for the first time publicly known and recognized by the church. It is then, and not till then, manifested, and completed in the eye of the Christian flock; the open incorporation into Christ is then made; the birth of "water" is added to that of the "Spirit;" a covenant right to all the blessings of Christ is sealed as by a deed; the translation from the visible "kingdom of Satan" into the visible kingdom of God's dear Son," is officially recorded, the inward spiritual change already commenced, is strengthened; "the promises of forgiveness of sins and of adoption to be the sons of God by the Holy Ghost are visibly signed and sealed, faith is confirmed, and grace increased by virtue of prayer to God;"† the Holy Spirit descends, in answer to such prayer, more copiously upon the soul, and makes it his especial temple; a solemn dedication takes place to each of the persons of the adorable Trinity in whose name baptism is celebrated; the penitent is engrafted openly into Christ, and enters the ark of his church. He now shares all the intercessions and other benefits of "the communion of the saints," and is admitted to partake of the mysteries of the Supper of the Lord. In a word, as "with the heart" he before had

* Article xxvii. "They that receive baptism rightly" are the persons spoken of, and those only.

† Article xxvii.

“believed unto righteousness;” so now “with his mouth he makes confession to salvation;” and upon this he is pronounced by the church, solemnly and authoritatively and most scripturally, “regenerate by God’s Holy Spirit,” in its amplest and richest meaning, as including both the “outward sign” and “the inward and spiritual grace.”

All this appertains, we must remember, to the cases of adult converts, “coming with repentance and faith;” and these are the cases we are now considering, and these only. And the whole question as to them is clear as the sun in its strength.

For it is a most important point to be again borne in mind that all the instances of baptism detailed in the New Testament relate, from the circumstances of the time, as we have already said, to converts capable of repentance and faith, and for themselves believing the Gospel.

Their “households,”²¹ indeed, are often expressly mentioned as having been baptized with them, including beyond all doubt children and babes; and we gather from this and many other arguments, as we shall hereafter see, that “the baptism of young children is in anywise to be retained in the church, as most agreeable with the institution of Christ,” as our Article most accurately determines. But we have no instance of the particulars of the administration in the case of infants, and no details of the blessings therein communicated to them. We proceed, therefore, on a charitable inference as to these blessings, till they are of age to exercise for themselves the repentance and faith required universally of persons to be baptized.*

It seems that we may now go on yet a step further, and infer, as our office in requiring a sponsion from the pro-parents, and a profession of faith in the name of the unconscious babes teaches us, that something in their case is still want-

* So the 27th Article treats only of adult baptism; adding the clause above cited.

21) Acts. xvi. 15, 33, 34. 1 Cor. i. 16.

ing to the full blessings of the sacrament as vouchsafed to the adult convert; that till they actually perform the conditions in all cases required previously to baptism,* things are inchoate, imperfect, dependent on the fulfilment of the promises made on their behalf; and that, in a word, it is the sponsor, so to speak, who is in the mean time baptized in the name of the child, in the confidence that he will ratify and fulfil in after life the vows made on his behalf." †

Considering, therefore, the relative and most important change of state certainly effected; the actual "washing of regeneration" and "birth of water" received; the promises solemnly made in the infant's name for the repentance and faith which in other cases precede baptism; the devout and fervid petitions for the grace of the Holy Ghost offered by the parents and sponsors with the minister and assembled congregation, resting on the promise of Christ to "give his Holy Spirit to them that ask him;" and the earnest prayer that it may "lead the rest of its life according to this beginning;" we may surely entertain a humble confidence that some measure of sanctifying influence, according to the capacity of the recipient, has been granted in answer to prayer, agreeably to this promise, and that the infant thus devoutly consecrated to God, may be properly said, in a covenant sense, to be both spiritually and externally "regenerated by God's Holy Spirit."

For in Holy Scripture, as well as in our services, the important words, regeneration and new birth, are used with

* *Quest.* "What is required of persons to be baptized?"

† *Ans.* "Repentance whereby they forsake sin, and faith whereby they steadfastly believe the promises of God made to them on that sacrament."

Quest. "Why, then, are infants baptized, when by reason of their tender age they cannot perform them?"

Ans. "Because they promise them both by their sureties, which promise, when they come of age, themselves are bound to perform."

† *Question to the Sponsor.* "Wilt THOU be baptized in this faith?"

Ans. "That is MY desire."

two degrees of amplitude; sometimes in a simple and abstract sense for the first buddings of spiritual life in the soul before "dead in trespasses and sins," that is, the beginning of the grand moral transformation of man into the image of God whenever they appear; and sometimes for the feeble commencements of the same change, humbly and charitably believed to have taken place, and signed and sealed in the eye of the church, in the appointed sacrament of baptism.*

Both meanings are found in the New Testament again and again, and require only to be properly employed.

In our offices the words are, of course, and most justly, used with strict relation to the appointed sacrament; and include, not only the earlier dawn of grace leading to a spiritual and moral change, or "the first disposition," as Hooker terms it, "towards newness of life," but all the other blessings attendant on the solemn washing with water in the threefold sacred name which I have above enumerated.

At the same time, the abstract and simple sense of the words, as unconnected especially with the sacrament, and imparting only the first beginnings of spiritual life, whenever, or by whatever means communicated, is perpetually found, also, in the New Testament, as we have seen.

And our reformers, and all our great theologians since, whilst preserving the more comprehensive meaning of them, as in our offices, when referring to baptism, used them also without reserve in their simple and popular import in their sermons and exhortations, when calling on men to examine themselves, and urging upon them the nature and necessity of a heavenly birth to be testified by its proper fruits. In this case they consider the words as synonymous with the

* As in John iii. 5, and Tit. iii. 5, and the other passages cited. The total omission of this comprehensive sense in many of our popular theological works, for a century and a half past, has given occasion to much of the confusion now prevailing. The wish to avoid the excessive and unscriptural use of the words by some of the fathers was a reason, but not a sufficient one, for this deviation from scriptural language.

multiplied expressions in Holy Scripture, which set forth the commencement of that interior work of the Spirit, without which no one can repent or believe the Gospel, nor be prepared for the kingdom of heaven.

There really seems no difficulty here; both senses of the word are scriptural and most important, each in its place; in fact, there is only one sense applied with greater or less amplitude, as circumstances require. But the utmost care, of course, should be taken, especially in a declining and dead state of the church, or when corruptions of doctrine are rife, or fundamental controversies on the sacraments agitated, and when there is an imminent danger of the abuse of sacramental expressions, to use with more caution the ecclesiastical and wider meaning in our popular addresses, and to dwell more on their simple and abstract, and directly spiritual and saving import.*

LECTURE XIX.

ERRONEOUS VIEW OF BAPTISMAL REGENERATION—INFANT BAPTISM.

COL. ii. 12.

12. *Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead.*

THE way is now prepared for considering the grossly erroneous system of our new divines with regard to baptism. They seem to cast off all care in the use of the sacred terms,

* The precise word, regeneration, occurs only twice in the New Testament, Tit. iii. 5, and Matt. xix. 28; and in the latter case means clearly a relative and external change of state only.

regeneration and new birth.* An ambiguity pervades their instructions. They entirely pass over the scriptural bearings of the subject, and the views of our reformers; and adopt exaggerated statements exactly where the greatest caution is required. In their hands it is part of the great apostacy itself. They describe all the blessings of a birth from above as invariably, and in all cases, conveyed to infants in baptism; and by a fearful wresting of the inspired Word and the language of our offices to their own purpose, they speak in a way which goes to discourage all self-examination as to spiritual evidences of the new creation in Christ Jesus. They overlook the immense importance of the conditions of a right administration and right reception of the sacrament. Thus they cut up the whole work of our sanctification by the roots; substitute the *opus operatum* of a popish ceremony for the scriptural doctrine of holy baptism; harden the hearts of men against the proofs and evidences of a spiritual birth; deny by implication the fundamental doctrine of the total fall and corruption of man; lower the standard of holiness and the gracious operations of the blessed Spirit; lead men to mistake a dead state of heart before God for a living and spiritual state; a dead faith for a true and lively one; a dead trust in the merits of Christ for a penitent reliance on him; and dead works made up of human traditions and inventions, (as our apostle shows in the subsequent verses of this chapter,) for the vital religion of Christ.

But this is not all. These divines go further still. They maintain the monstrous figment of the unconscious infant's being in every case justified and accounted righteous before the bar of God by baptism; they assert that there are only two moments when man can be declared innocent, in baptism and at the day of judgment; and that deadly sins after this

* Even our Article xxvii. seems to use the words "regeneration and new birth" in their popular sense first, and then to connect them with baptism; i. e. to give them the extended meaning which they have in our offices.

sacrament cannot fully be pardoned, nor the penitent be entirely restored to God's favour in this life.

And all this and more they include in what they term baptismal regeneration—a defensible expression, indeed, in itself, like most others which they employ, if scripturally explained; but in their sense of it involving the most fatal errors.

And yet on this sandy foundation, defended by a confusion of words worthy only of Jesuitical casuists, they build their fabric of man-invented divinity, and buttress it up with obscure catenas of fathers, doctrines, traditions, pretences of Catholic tenets and church principles, as they term them, in the sense of the mass of errors held to be such in the corrupt and demonolatrous fourth and fifth centuries, to confound the minds of the unlearned. Thus the whole mediation of Christ which our apostle is so careful to maintain in this epistle is swamped, the sacraments and not faith erected into the chief means of salvation, justification explained in the sense of the Council of Trent, the reformers decried, popery whitewashed and extolled, saint-worship and its concomitant idolatry palliated, and our church, the glory of the reformation, “unprotestantized,” so far as they are concerned.

It may lead us to turn away with the greater horror from all this superstition, if we refer to one more series of scriptural passages which I have reserved for this place.

At the close almost of the canon of Scripture, the aged and venerable St. John, the beloved disciple, and sole survivor of the apostolic college, writing nearly sixty years after the publication of the Gospel of St. Matthew, and twenty or thirty after the Epistles of the several apostles, St. Paul, St. Peter, and St. James, is led by the inspiring Spirit to lay down certain conspicuous and broad marks of the “being born of God.” In doing this, the last of the inspired writers, as if he feared the rise of the fatal abuse of the doctrine of baptism which so soon began to work in the papacy, makes no allusion whatever to the sacrament now so much exagge-

rated, but declares without limitation or reserve, "That whosoever doeth righteousness is born of him"—"That whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin, for his seed remaineth in him and he cannot sin, because he is born of God"—"That we know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren"—"That every one that loveth is born of God, for God is love"—That "whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God"—That "Whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world;" and that "Whosoever is born of God sinneth not; but he that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not."¹

These passages settle the question. There is nothing more to be said to him that admits the plenary inspiration of Holy Scripture. We are not only permitted, but required to declare, that every one that doeth not righteousness is not born of God; that whosoever committeth sin, habitually and wilfully, is not born of God; that they who love not the brethren, have not passed from death unto life; that he that loveth not is not born of God; that whosoever doth not believe that Jesus is the Christ, is not born of God; that he that overcometh not the world, is not born of God; that he that (habitually) sinneth and keepeth not himself from the wicked one, is not born of God, nor begotten of God.

Let us watch, then, brethren, against the remaining tendencies of these incalculable evils. Let us be assured that all "the fulness of the Godhead bodily" is in Christ, and that we are "complete in him." Let us pray to have the "circumcision not made with hands." Let us judge of the blessings we have derived from the covenant sealed in baptism, by our being *buried with Christ, and rising with him through faith in the operation of God who raised him from the dead*. Let us remember that in a lukewarm, declining, and dead state of the church, it is most perilous to argue from the language of offices designed for the sincere and earnest and

1) 1 John ii. 29; iii. 9, 14; iv. 7; v. 1, 4, 18.

spiritual followers of Christ, to the cold and heartless services of thoroughly worldly baptismal assemblages, when frequently not one condition of the promised blessings is fulfilled.* For in the nature of things can it be expected that baptism, carelessly administered, and received as a mere matter of form and ceremony, without faith on the part of parents or sponsors; without one petition put up from the heart for the Holy Spirit; without the least thought or desire about spiritual blessings; with nothing attended to but a pageant, a carnal rejoicing, a customary insertion, for civil purposes, of a name in a register, can bring with it a divine influence for the highest ends of the sacrament? Is God to be so trifled with? Can we wonder that infants thus consecrated to Christ in mere pretence, and never instructed afterwards, never taught the elements of the Gospel, never accustomed to witness the prayers of their parents or their godly example, never taking a step "according to the beginning" made in baptism, should show, when the dawn of reason breaks, no one single sign of spiritual life in its most incipient and imperfect form? And can any poison be more deadly than to treat such persons as "born of God?"† Such cases

* "So give now unto us that ask; let us that seek find; open the gate unto us that knock,"—and so all through the office, prayers, promises, sponsions, thanksgivings, on the part of parents and sponsors, are supposed to be 'put up, sincerely of course; and these constitute the conditions of the promised blessings.

† The judicious and learned Joseph Milner, in his excellent History of the Church, acutely observes, when upon the subject of Cyprian's conversion, that Cyprian "records a remarkable influence of divine grace which appeared to him to have accompanied his baptism. Nor is it unreasonable," Milner proceeds, "to suppose that this was commonly the case at that time. The inward and spiritual grace really attended the outward and visible sign. And it is to be lamented that the corruption and perversion of after ages, availing itself of the ambiguous language of the fathers upon this subject—which then was natural enough—supposed a NECESSARY connexion to take place where there had been a frequent one. In Cyprian's time, to call baptism itself the new birth was not very dangerous: in our age it is poison itself. Men are apt to content themselves with the outward and visible sign; and it has long been the

may be thought rare ; but in a day of great decline, and of the almost total absence of church discipline, many instances approach but too nearly to this startling description.

Let us, then, stand by Christ. Let us not be "moved away from the hope of the Gospel." Let us honour sacraments and all means of grace in a reverent, enlightened, and scriptural manner. But let Christ, as our apostle teaches, be our "all and in all." Let us "distinguish things that differ." Let us use the language of Scripture in the various senses in which it is there employed, with all "wisdom and spiritual understanding;" and let us never confound the sacraments and ordinances of Christ with the mighty grace of which they are the signs and seals and means of conveyance only to the penitent and believing soul.

But I proceed now to consider more at length the scriptural authority for our receiving the infants of the faithful to the blessings of holy baptism. I enter on the subject because some may be agitated by doubts excited in their minds by opponents.

Surely no part of the system of the Gospel is more evidently compassionate and divine than that which comprehends the helpless and unconscious infant within the arms of the divine mercy, till he is of age to understand and act for himself. This is entirely agreeable to the order of things in providence as to all matters affecting the state and happiness of children. The parent represents them, acts for them, claims all advantages for them which may accrue, enters into beneficial engagements and obligations, signs contracts, takes possession of inheritances in their name—on the supposition that the child when of age will confirm by his own acts,

fashion to suppose all persons who have been baptized when they were infants, to be of course when they are grown up, in a state of regeneration by the Holy Spirit. And thus men have learnt to furnish themselves with a convenient evasion of all that is written in Scripture concerning the godly notions of the third person of the sacred Trinity."

when necessary, what the benevolence and forethought of his parents and guardians did and undertook by anticipation for him.

2. The substitution, then, of baptism for circumcision, in the verses we have been considering, seems taken for granted by the apostle as already known; nor is the least intimation given that the subjects capable of it are to be different. This carries the whole question.

3. The commission of our Lord, also, could be understood in no other sense than had, from the time of Abraham, marked the divine proceedings with respect to children. It was addressed to Jews who knew that, long before the Mosaical law, infants had been expressly, and by name, ordered by Almighty God to be admitted, at the eighth day after birth, into the covenant of grace by circumcision. There had never been any doubt upon the question. The command, therefore, for the promulgation of the Gospel, with the corresponding initiatory sacrament of baptism, being made to Jews, and no alteration being intimated, could never have been understood by them in any other light.

4. Had the commission been to extend the Jewish religion all over the earth, and had the command run thus, "Go ye, therefore, and teach"—make disciples or Jews of—"all nations; circumcising them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you;" no one of the apostles would or could have hesitated for an instant—it would have excited no surprise—it would have been merely the continuance of a principle expressly enjoined in preceding dispensations. There would have wanted no new command under the Gospel for the admission of infants into God's merciful covenant.

5. For it is to be observed that many of the great outlines of the will of God, (not being parts of the ceremonial law, but relating to matters of universal obligation,) if once clearly revealed, are not always expressly repeated in the

New Testament. We have no right to demand such a repetition. The Gospel supposes these matters to be settled. In whatever way God is pleased to make known his will, it is enough. Such are the various duties of natural religion as they are termed ; such the reception of the infants of the faithful into God's merciful covenant ; the observation of one day of rest after six days of labour ; the plenary inspiration of all Holy Scripture ; the duties of kings and rulers to establish and protect the true religion ; the connexion of church and state ; the moral government of God over nations, and his dealing with them in their corporate capacity ; the enormous guilt and provocations of idolatry, and perhaps the gradations in the ranks and orders of ministers ; the consecration of sacred buildings to God by solemn prayer, and the use of instrumental music to assist, if needed, in the congregational praises of the Almighty ; and so as to a variety of other things, the divine authority for which the church of God has been acting upon for thousands of years, and which are in their measure binding upon the conscience still. This is a grand principle which is too often overlooked.

6. The apostles, accordingly, long hesitated about admitting the Gentiles at all into the Christian covenant, without the observation of the Mosaical law ; but they never doubted whether, on receiving them, they should admit also with them the children and households which formed a part of themselves. That the mercy of God should be enlarged to the utmost comprehension under the Gospel was natural, and in the course of things ; but that it should be narrowed and contracted all at once with respect to the objects of the divine compassion, and that the infants of the Jewish believers should be thrust out of the spiritual corporation of God's people, and the covenant of his grace, on their parents' receiving Christ, when they were in that covenant and corporation the moment before they received him, would have been wholly contrary to the genius of the Gospel, and the order of the divine mercy in the last and most gracious dis-

penetration, and seems never once to have entered into the minds of the apostles. A direct and positive prohibition would have been required.

7. They had already heard their Master say, "Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not." They had seen him "take them up in his arms and lay his hands upon them and bless them." They had heard him declare, "Of such is the kingdom of heaven." The baptism of "Lydia and her house," of "the jailer and all his," and of "the household of Stephanus," is mentioned as a matter of course, and perfectly intelligible to every reader of the Old Testament. St. Paul, in the same unartificial manner, alluding to the well-known extent of the administration of baptism, says, "The unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband; else were your children unclean; but now are they holy," that is, by having been publicly received into the church and covenant of Christ.

8. Accordingly, though we have inspired epistles written to churches during a series of sixty or seventy years after the first promulgation of the Gospel, no controversy arose upon this point; which, considering the character of the Jewish zealots, seems quite conclusive as to the fact that no change took place with regard to the subjects of the initiatory sacrament.

9. Nor is any one allusion found to any class of unbaptized youth, which must have been numerous in every church, within a few years after its being founded, had the infants of the converts not been admitted with them into the covenant of mercy.

10. Accordingly, there is not one single instance in the whole period of sixty or seventy years during which the New Testament history extends, of any person born of Christian parents having been baptized when grown up.

11. And further, when the apostle describes the excision of the Jews from their parent "olive-tree," and their being

re-engrafted into it when "they turn to the Lord," no hint is given of any change in the classes of persons to be thus re-inserted. They were "broken off" with their households and infants of eight days old; they will be "grafted in again" in the same most gracious and comprehensive manner, we may be well assured.

12. The universal practice of the apostolic and early Christian churches confirms this view of the case as it lies in Scripture. For on so broad and palpable a fact as whether baptism was administered to infants or not, their testimony is decisive. The heretics of the first four centuries, when they wished to evade the confession of their sentiments as to the fall of man, still avowed their faith in the baptism of infants, as a point never questioned. Nor was it till the sixteenth century that any body of Christians arose to deny the validity and extent of baptism, as applicable to the children of the faithful. And even now, after eighteen ages, the whole universal church, including all the Lutheran and Protestant communities, and the smaller subdivisions of persons separated from national churches, with the single exception of those who are known by the name of Baptists, hold the primitive doctrine of infant baptism.

13. The subordinate question of the mode of administering the rite, I pass over as of little consequence. Our own church authorizes baptism by immersion, except where the parents can plead the inability of the infant by reason of health. But baptism by affusion, especially in the colder regions of Christendom, where necessity dictates it, seems quite agreeable to the general goodness of that God, who "will have mercy and not sacrifice." The import of the original word is allowed to be capable of either interpretation. And the greater or less quantity of the emblematical element is considered by most churches, and apparently with good reason, as, under a spiritual dispensation, of subordinate moment.

14. It is important, further, to observe, that all the sup-

posed advantages of baptism in adult years are secured by the primitive and edifying rite of confirmation, which in one form or other is retained, after the example of the apostles, in all the branches of Christ's holy church; when the parents and sponsors resign their charge, and the catechumen, ratifying and confirming his vows, is solemnly admitted, after due examination, by prayer and the imposition of hands, to the profession of his faith in his own name, and all the personal blessings and privileges of the covenant of grace.

15. The minds of the young and unstable are sometimes disturbed by persons misinterpreting or misapplying our Lord's command, "Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature; he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, and he that believeth not shall be damned." This passage, say they, is clearly against the baptizing of infants; for if believing be a requisite qualification for baptism, as children cannot believe, so ought they not to be baptized. It is surprising that those who reason thus, do not advance a step further still, and contend that as believing is here represented as necessary to salvation, it follows also that, as infants cannot believe, so neither can they be saved. And thus the horrible doctrine of the final perdition of infants is brought in. Arguments that involve such a fearful contradiction of the whole tenor of Scripture must necessarily be false. The truth is, the objectors here introduce into their conclusion an entire class of individuals who were never thought of in their premises. For to what class of heathens and Jews was the Gospel preached at the promulgation of the Gospel? Was it not to adults? And to what heathen, Jews, and Mahommedans now is it still preached? Is it not to adults, i. e. to persons capable of faith or unbelief? And to every one of them we declare, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, but he that believeth not shall be damned." The error of applying such texts to infants, is seen at once, when other passages of a similar construction are considered. As an instance, let us try to

apply the argument to the apostolic rule, "If any will not work, neither shall he eat." Infants cannot work, therefore neither shall they eat. And yet weak as such an argument is, it is the most plausible one advanced by those who object to the baptism of the children of the faithful.

LECTURE XX.

THE COLOSSIAN CHRISTIANS ACCEPTED WITHOUT LEGAL OBSERVANCES—THEIR ABOLITION—TRIUMPH OF THE CROSS.

COL. II. 13—17.

THE apostle having cleared the capital question of the access and introduction into the dispensation of the Gospel being without circumcision, proceeds, in the next place, to appeal to the actual experience of the Colossians themselves, and to remind them that they were complete in Christ in this respect, as well as every other, though uncircumcised; "the forgiveness of sins in his blood" having, as he had before more than once shown, laid a firm foundation for all other blessings.

13. *And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses.*

Thus he applies to their particular case his general doctrine as to the admission, by the grace of Christ alone, into the evangelical covenant. This is exactly what he had done with regard to the doctrine of reconciliation in the first chapter; "And you that were sometimes alienated and enemies in your minds by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled in the body of his flesh through death."

Ministers should apply their instructions to the individual consciences and hearts of their flocks. They should turn from universal to particular topics ; and address their hearers as personally concerned ; *And you, &c.* Otherwise the slippery and treacherous mind of man will elude conviction, and be content with a vague approbation of a truth which ought to enter and pierce the whole soul.

The apostle urges upon the Colossians, in the verse before us, three things : their state by nature ; the divine life communicated to them by Christ ; and the remission of sins in his one sacrifice, which was its meritorious source.

He thus shut out the false teachers on all hands. They could pretend to nothing beyond offering an adequate remedy for man's double misery of distance from God, and of guilt. Sanctification and justification included all men could require to eternal salvation. But they could pretend to nothing beyond. They did neither of these things. But these, Christ by his fulness of power and grace as the only Mediator, had actually effected for them.

1. Both these great blessings supposed the natural state of man to be deeply known and felt. The apostle, therefore, enforces this point once again in the strongest terms. *You being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh*—motionless, without knowledge, without feeling, without desire, without care as to spiritual things ; dead to God, the author of felicity, ignorant of his being and attributes ; dead to his love and worship, dead to his honour and interests in the world ; dead to the real love of their fellow-creatures ; lost in brutish idolatry, sensuality, cruelty, and alienation of heart from the living and true God. As the lifeless corpse is incapable of any of the affections or acts of the natural life, so the soul “*dead in trespasses and sins*” to the spiritual. They had been alive enough to sin, to vice, to idolatry, to all the uncleanness and turpitude of a false religion ; but as to the true God, and desire of his pardon and grace, and love to him, and prayer, and holy affections, they had been ignorant, insensible, and cold as the grave.

So it is with men now in Christian lands; too many are lifeless still. "She that liveth in pleasure," saith our apostle, "is dead while she liveth." And so he that liveth to the world, to the flesh, to self, to pride, to covetousness, to ambition, "is dead" to all the feelings of the spiritual mind, "whilst he liveth."

The Colossians had been, in their external separation also from the church and fold of God, dead and lost, lying afar off *in the uncircumcision of their flesh*, an appropriate mark of the corruption, blindness, and obduracy of their Gentile state.

The condition of man since the fall is described in Holy Scripture, not only as a state of servitude, exile, disease, poverty, blindness, wretchedness, misery, hopelessness, but of death.

The spiritual life has its principles in "the image of God, in knowledge, righteousness, and true holiness;" and also its proper actions and exercises in love to God, piety, prayer, obedience, charity, patience, preparation for death and heaven.

Of all this man is naturally insensible. He is in a state of death, and of uncircumcision, as it were, until the Gospel reaches his heart.

2. The Colossians had, however, experienced a total change. They had been *quickened together with him*, raised from the "death of sin to the life of righteousness," after the example and by the grace of Christ's own resurrection; made alive, and susceptible of spiritual desires, affections, and pursuits; a new and divine life having been infused.

This refers to what the apostle had said in the preceding verse, "Wherein also ye are risen with him by the faith of the operation of God who raised him from the dead." This serves still further to show that the stress in our consideration of the initiatory sacrament is to be laid on the actual effects of the spiritual change which it represents, seals, and completes in the sincere penitent. For the apostle repeats his former language, dropping every thing about the sacra-

ment. He had already guarded against any mistake, by saying that they had "risen with Christ by faith of the operation of God." Still he strengthens the true view by repeating the description of the spiritual change alone. We are thus taught not to appeal to baptism in proof of our being quickened and made alive with Christ; but to appeal to our spiritual life in proof of our having received baptism rightly, and having partaken of all its benefits.

The source of most errors about this sacrament, indeed, lies here. Men neither know nor feel what the death of sin means, nor what the new and heavenly life; and thus they use words without correspondent ideas, and fall, of course, into the most extraordinary and dangerous errors.

Having forgiven you all trespasses. This clause touches on St Paul's principal purpose, which was to show that they are "complete in Christ," whatever the false zealots might pretend to. The work of our Lord on the meritorious cross lay at the bottom of the whole plan of salvation. For though the grace of the Spirit in sanctification is the source of the new creation, and turns away our souls from sin, and quickens them together with Christ; yet this is not enough. The guilt of past sins remains; and the daily imperfections of our best obedience require pardon; and the very gift of his own Son and of his Spirit supposes Almighty God to be graciously disposed to men on the footing of some atonement about to be made.

And therefore the apostle lays down here, as the foundation of all other benefits, the provision for the free remission of sins.

So in the grand passages concerning the new covenant in the prophet Jeremiah and the Epistle to the Hebrews; after an enumeration of its immense benefits in the law inscribed on the heart, and the knowledge of the Lord universally diffused, and the relation between God and man in covenant established, the Almighty adds, as the ground and first cause of all, "For I will be merciful to their unright-

eousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more.”

And in like manner our apostle, having in his first chapter spoken of the “translation” of the Colossians from “the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of God’s dear Son,” and their having been “made meet for the inheritance of the saints in light ;” adds, as the foundation of all these blessings, “In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins.”

So he premises to the account of the great and ample blessings of the reconciliation of “things in heaven and things on earth,” that Christ had made peace through the “blood of his cross.”

The emphatic words which conclude the verse now before us, *Having forgiven you all trespasses*, have the same import. Justification is the source of sanctification. God had quickened them together with Christ, because he had in the death and mediation of that blessed Redeemer provided for the forgiveness of all their transgressions ; to the actual benefits of which he had admitted them on their repentance, faith, and confession of his name. The undertaking of the Eternal Word to become incarnate, and suffer in the stead of a lost world, was the condition to which the infinite wisdom and love of God saw fit to attach all the blessings of the Gospel ; “God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life.” The meritorious passion and prevalent intercession of this Great High Priest and Mediator obtained for us the gift of the Holy Ghost ; this blessed Spirit, accompanying the word of the Gospel, had begotten the Colossians to a new life ; and then, on their humble penitence and faith, the forgiveness of all trespasses had been actually vouchsafed to them ; and thus sanctification, of which the first preventient grace had already brought them in an incipient measure back to God by repentance and faith, began its full and more powerful and abiding

work in them, in a daily progress of love to God and man, in the mortification of the remaining force of sin, and in communion with Christ. God's forgiving mercy in the blood of Christ is always conjoined with the infusion of holiness. When sin is remitted, not only are guilt and liability to punishment removed, but the will and affections are vivified and renewed by an internal operation.

14. *Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross :*

15. *And having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it.*

A most sublime and important passage, if there be any such in the whole Bible ; and the position of it in the apostle's argument as weighty as the matter is glorious. The apostle is not content with overwhelming the false teachers in their error of insisting on circumcision as an indispensable entrance to the Gospel covenant, by showing that we have the "circumcision of the heart," but he takes occasion from the last clause of his argument, "the forgiveness of all trespasses," to burst forth into the exalted description of the full benefits of Christ's bitter death on the cross, which is now to be considered.

His object is not only to strengthen all he had said of the introduction to the covenant of grace having been fully provided for in the heavenly birth vouchsafed to the Colossians and sealed in baptism, but also to prepare for sweeping away by a single stroke all the vain fancies of the false teachers which took their rise from the Mosaic law ; whether those fancies rested on the Jewish ceremonies themselves, or took a higher and more dangerous flight in the idolatrous worship of angels and saints, or grovelled in the miserable austerities which sprang from both.

He had already briefly condemned these three classes of errors, of which the centre and capital one was angel-wor-

ship; and he had also prepared his way for resuming and enlarging the general condemnation, by showing that the access to the covenant was thrown wide open by “the circumcision not made with hands;” but now he extols yet more, in a most magnificent passage, all the previous parts of his doctrine concerning the glory of Christ’s work and the perfection of his mediation; adding to them a celebration of his triumph over Satan and all his hosts, in the sight of a rescued world, even upon the cross.

Here we must notice in order, 1. The hand-writing; 2. Its contrariety to us; 3. Its removal; 4. The nailing of it to the cross; 5. Satan and his host spoiled; a show made of them openly; and the final triumph celebrated.

May God assist us with his Holy Spirit in our meditation on the most astonishing passage of this class in the whole compass of Scripture!

1. A handwriting imports in general what any one writes with his own hand, and particularly a bond or caution written with the hand of a debtor, that he may never be able to deny the debt, but may be sued for it whenever the creditor pleases.

Thus, all the ordinances of divine worship during the patriarchal dispensation, all the law of ceremonies, all the types and figures, all the national covenant mediated by Moses, together with the republication of the moral law with its curse against the transgressor from Mount Sinai; were several parts of the bond of the ancient church for the payment of the debt of sin contracted by a violation of the divine commandments.

The types, indeed, and prophecies, from the very time of the fall of Adam, foretold and promised the future Messiah; and a due attendance on the appointed services and sacrifices admitted to ceremonial purity and the privileges of the national covenant. They were also to the penitent and believing worshippers (such as Enoch, Abraham, Moses, David, Nehemiah, &c.) the “seal of the righteousness of faith” in

the Messiah to whom they looked forward ; and thus they “believed God, and it was imputed to them for righteousness.”¹

But the ceremonies in themselves were the bond and obligation of a debtor ; they were an avowal of guilt ; they were a *handwriting*, a deed which might be sued out at any moment against them. And therefore the apostle elsewhere admits, that in the repetition of those “sacrifices there was a remembrance of sin made every year ;” and adds the conclusive reason, “For it was not possible that the blood of bulls and goats should take away sin.”

What, in truth, was circumcision but an acknowledgment of original corruption ? What the offerings and purifications after child-birth, but the confession that man was “born in sin and shapen in iniquity ?” What the victims immolated, but an admission that all men were obnoxious to death ? What the daily and weekly sacrifices, but a witness that they were guilty before God ?

What the high priest entering the holy of holies once a year ? what the great day of atonement ? what the passover ? what the year of jubilee ? what the abstinence from leaven ? what the endless washings, &c.,—but so many parts of the *handwriting*—so many acknowledgments of guilt ? And if retained under the Gospel by vain philosophy or Jewish prejudices, now that they are abolished, what were they but deeds acknowledged to be still out against us, to be still valid, to bind us over still to punishment at the will of the Almighty Creditor and Lord ?

2. This *handwriting of ordinances*, then, may well be said to be *against us, and contrary to us*, especially if made the foundation of meritorious pretences by the false teachers. The ceremonial law, like the moral connected with it in the national covenant, “gendered to bondage ;” constituted a “middle wall of partition” against the Gentile ; nourished and inflamed “the enmity” between the Jew and the rest of

1) Rom. iv. 3.

mankind; and was in itself “a yoke on the neck of the fathers which,” even whilst it continued in force, “they were not able to bear.”²

And so the apostle to the Ephesian converts speaks of Christ “being our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us; having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances, for to make of himself of twain one new man, so making peace; and that he might reconcile both unto God in one body on the cross, having slain the enmity thereby, and came and preached peace to you which were afar off, and to them that were nigh. For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father.”³

Would the Colossians, then, listen to men, who would renew the handwriting of ordinances thus contrary to them? Would they build up again the “wall of partition?” Would they rekindle the “enmity” with God and their Gentile fellow-Christians? Would they shut up the “access” which Christ had opened by his agonizing sufferings on the cross? God forbid!

3. But where, in truth, was the handwriting now? Let them remember that Christ had altogether removed and cancelled it—*blotting out the handwriting, and took it out of the way*, are the apostle’s words. The Son of God, as the complete and all-sufficient Saviour and Mediator, had effaced the deed; had paid, as our Surety and Substitute, our enormous debt for us; had not only freed us from the condemnation of the law, but, as the Author of a better covenant established on better promises, had taken all the ceremonies and ordinances entirely out of the way, obliterated the writings, of which they were a part, cancelled and abolished and annihilated the bond and instrument which was *against us, and contrary to us*; that so no monument of obligation might remain, no witness against us be capable of being brought for-

2) Acts xv. 10.

3) Eph. ii. 14—18.

ward. He had fulfilled all the types ; had “magnified the law and made it honourable in the body of his flesh through death ;” had suffered all the penalty which our sins had deserved ; and then, lest any controversy should afterwards arise, or any should assert that new charges might be made ; or should suppose, as the false doctors did, that the blessed Creditor might forget or be weary, as it were, of the act of forgiveness, and demand again any part of the debt, he crossed it out, as it were ; and, having cancelled it, took it clean out of the way, that it no longer might be pleaded in court against us.

But this is not enough. This indeed cut away the ground from under the false teachers, whether they pretended to revive the handwriting by Mosaical ceremonies, or built upon them philosophical inventions and debasing human traditions. But the apostle goes further, and, in order to mark the completeness of Christ’s mediatorial work, and the agonizing sufferings by which he effected it, he adds the astonishing words, “Nailing it to his cross.” For it might be feigned that the handwriting was hidden somewhere and might be brought forth again, and preferred against us hereafter. Taken out of the way for the time, indeed, it was—blotted out and effaced, indeed it was ; but a deed, though said to be cancelled and removed, might yet be concealed and produced after a time, as a matter of dispute or reproach ; even as the false apostles at Colosse were endeavouring to do. No, replies the apostle ; Behold, the deed is affixed publicly to the very cross on which our Lord paid all the debt it bound upon us. There, in the sight of the world, and of angels and men, is exhibited aloft on the cross the cancelled handwriting. View it there, torn as it is and rent asunder by those very nails wherewith Christ was affixed and lacerated upon the accursed tree. There is the deed and the discharge—there the acknowledgment of the debt, and the payment of it by the Surety—there the wrath of God incurred, and expiated—there the law fulfilled, and abolished.

Those very nails, that very crown of thorns, that very spear which pierced and wounded the body of our Lord, pierced at the same time the bond and handwriting. These instruments of torture were intended, it is true, by Satan and his hosts for another purpose. They were designed only for inflicting greater anguish upon the sufferer, for aggravating the bitterness of his death, and venting all the malice of devils and men on his sacred person. But, lo! in the infinite wisdom of God, the nails and spear were driven, not more surely through his divine hands and feet, than through the deed and bond which bound a lost world to a death similar to his own.

Where, then, are the ceremonies with their yoke? where the philosophy of men with all its angel-mediators? where the human impositions and traditions with their uncommanded and false humility? There they are upon the cross, pierced through and through, torn, lacerated, illegible, cancelled, and exhibited as a spectacle for the perpetual consolation and assurance of the faithful penitent.

5. But St. Paul has not done. Rising with the grandeur of his subject, he compares the scene of the cross, so mournful in the eyes of men, to the splendid Roman triumph in which the captives taken in the victorious combat were used to be led in gorgeous procession as the trophies of the conqueror.

Such was the triumph of our Lord in a spiritual sense. So complete were his sufferings, so entire his abolition of the handwriting, so full his atonement, so adequate to all the necessities of ruined man his sacrifice, so acceptable and well-pleasing to the Father his substitution of himself for sinners, so absolute and glorious his defeat of the dire purposes of Satan, sin, and death, that the very cross was to the eye of faith the most glorious triumph. At the very moment when Satan and the Jews conceived they had accomplished their hellish purpose; when Christ and his new religion seemed crushed at a blow; when the powers of darkness had their

hour ; when the efforts of Satan, which had succeeded against the first Adam, appeared to succeed against the second ; when the hopes of the fugitive disciples were extinguished ; when the sun veiled in darkness might be thought to symbolize the destruction of man's expectations of redemption excited during four thousand years ; at that very instant Satan was vanquished, dethroned from his usurped dominion, "fell as lightning from heaven," was carried off and led away captive as a spoil of the conqueror, and made a show of openly to a rescued world.

There on the cross behold the triumph ! the law fulfilled -- God's moral government vindicated—death robbed of its prey—Satan, "the prince of this world, cast out"—principalities and powers led in procession as captives—a show of them openly made—the imprisoned world set free, and the final victory over every enemy assured.

Where, then, are the inventions and follies of men ? Where the worship of principalities and powers ? All, all are led in triumph by the suffering, dying, agonizing, atoning Saviour.

16. *Let no man therefore judge you in meat or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moons, or of the Sabbath days,*

17. *Which are a shadow of things to come, but the body is of Christ.*

With what incomparable force does the apostle here descend from the height of his lofty argument, to sweep away the first class of errors which rested on the Mosaical ceremonies.

If Christ had thus gloriously triumphed over death and hell, and cancelled the bond and handwriting of ordinances, and even nailed it to his cross, let no man presume to judge them and make them guilty of a fault, and deprive them of their Christian liberty by renewed injunctions with respect to meats or drinks, or the other ceremonial distinctions of that old dispensation.

The apostle does not here specify any of the greater institutions of the Jewish economy, as in his Epistle to the Hebrews. There is not a word about the sacrifices, the high priesthood, the temple, the day of atonement, or the passover; but only those inconsiderable matters which the Jewish zealots could easily transfer to a heathen city, *meats and drinks and holydays, &c.*

A very few remarks on the particulars here cited will suffice.

Very probably the false teachers extended the Mosaical prohibitions of meats by the traditions of their pretended oral law, or the rules of the Pythagorean philosophy; and added some concerning drinks never enjoined in the inspired volume at all.

The new moons were the days on which the trumpets sounded at the beginning of the month.

The holydays were the several appointed feasts, as that of Pentecost and of Tabernacles. The Sabbaths (that is, those of Mosaical institution, as the Sabbath of every seven years and that of each fifty,) are joined in the plural number with the new moons as in Isaiah: "Your new moons and your Sabbaths, the calling of assemblies, I cannot away with,"⁴ to mark that the apostle intended the ceremonial ones only.

The primeval observation of the one weekly day of rest after each six days of labour, ordained in paradise before the fall, stood on quite different grounds from these, formed an integral part of the moral law, and was constantly enforced by the prophets as the sign of the covenant of grace, that the Lord was "he who sanctified them."⁵ This blessed law of the Sabbath was mercifully relieved, indeed, by our Lord from the austerities of the Pharisees, but left in all its divine authority as a part of his last dispensation, and the pledge and earnest of the rest of heaven.

But the ceremonial new moons and Sabbaths of which

.) Isaiah i. 13.

5) Ezek. xx. 12.

the apostle speaks, were all a part of the handwriting which Christ blotted out and nailed to his cross. With regard to all these abrogated ceremonies, they must let no one assume to sit in judgment on them, and to condemn them, or to enforce them on their consciences as necessary to complete the salvation of Christ.

Here we need hardly observe with what extreme caution the few necessary rules, and ceremonies, and festivals of the Christian church should be spoken of and enjoined. They may and ought to be regulated from time to time. Christians may most profitably observe the anniversaries of the advent, nativity, circumcision, temptation, crucifixion, resurrection, ascension, of our Lord. The greatest advantages follow from such solemn periods of annual celebration. They may, also, on certain days, commemorate and thank God for having raised up the various inspired apostles and evangelists, and pray for grace to follow their doctrine and example. The church, moreover, has power to "decree rites and ceremonies," and regulate matters of discipline; and has "authority also in controversies of faith." Without these, endless contest and confusion would follow in a national church. But they must be kept entirely subordinate. We must not judge our brethren in respect to them, nor incur any suspicion of making them necessary to salvation. Nor must they be enacted beyond a clear expediency, and the real ends of edification.

The apostle adds a reason as to the non-necessity of the Jewish ceremonies, *which are shadows of things to come; but the body is of Christ.* As the shadows to the body or substance, so are the types of the law to Christ. They were figures of evangelical blessings. But the truth, reality, and substance of them were now found in Christ's person, work, and salvation. "In him the believer was complete." It would be absurd, therefore, for him to catch at the shadow and embrace it, when Christ, whom it represented, was actually come. This would be to declare himself not complete

in him; it would be to bring back the cancelled handwriting; it would be an attempt to patch up and restore the torn and effaced deed; it would be to take down the transfixed bond from the cross; it would be to extract the nails by which it was driven through; and would go to tarnish and annul the triumphant "shew over principalities and powers" exhibited so conspicuously on the Mount of Calvary.

But let us pause; the mind is oppressed with the glory of the scene. Let us only pray that we may enter more and more into our Saviour's triumph; believe in the all-sufficiency of his work as Mediator; and reject all the pretended necessity of abrogated ceremonies. And to this end, let us meditate on the first division of the verses we have been reviewing, and pray that we may be "quicken'd" more and more from the death of sin, and walk more in the spiritual and holy life of the new man in Christ Jesus; so that we may share his victory over principalities and powers, and ourselves at length be made "more than conquerors through him who hath loved us."

LECTURE XXI.

CAUTION AGAINST SAINT AND ANGEL-WORSHIP—ITS RISE AND
PROGRESS—PROPHECIES CONCERNING IT.

COL. ii. 18, 19.

18. *Let no man beguile you of your reward in a voluntary humility and worshipping of angels, intruding into those things which he hath not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind.*

19. *And not holding the Head, from which all the body by joints and bands having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God.*

I PLACE at the head of this lecture the two verses which will form the subject of the present and two following ones,

because they contain the apostle's final and more detailed sentence on the most perilous of the corruptions at Colosse.

They open to us, in fact, the germ of the whole "mystery of iniquity" which afterwards overspread, and has now for many centuries continued to overspread, the eastern and western churches; with the latter, however, of which—the western—we are chiefly at present concerned.

The idolatrous worship of saints and angels is, I conceive, the grand abomination of popery. It is the highest provocation of the Almighty, directly overthrows the mediation of Christ, "in whom alone we are complete," and is the centre of the vast circumference of Romish error and superstition. That which constituted the pope anti-christ is, if I mistake not, idolatry, the transfer to the Virgin Mary and other dead men and women, and to their images and relics, and to the elements of bread and wine in the Eucharist, a measure of that religious adoration and intercessory reliance which is due only to Christ, our glorious and all-sufficient and only Mediator and Intercessor.

The apostle's course of argument confirms me in this view of the case. The Mosaical rites insisted upon by the false teachers at Colosse were only a stepping-stone to the vain speculations which ended in the worship and idolatry of angels. The observance of the legal ceremonies was not the peculiar danger there, nor was it so prevalent as in some other churches; for it was common to them all in a greater or less degree.

Our apostle, therefore, in writing to the Colossians, does not treat this error as he did in his Epistle to the Galatians. He does not argue at length on justification. He does not tell them that "if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain." He does not declare that "Christ would profit them nothing, as many of them as were justified by the law." He does not proclaim aloud that "if any man or angel preached any other doctrine than that which he had delivered to them, he was accursed."¹

1) Gal. ii. 21; v. 2; i. 8, 9.

No; the case of the Colossians was different. It concerned justification and Mosaic rites only indirectly. The main point was the mediation of Christ, which saint-worship directly opposed. As this, however, had only just appeared amongst them; and Epaphras had instantly, as it should seem, resorted to the apostle for advice, before it began to spread, there was only need for the apostle to pronounce a strong and decisive judgment on the incipient impiety.

The whole Epistle, however, had been directed with admirable wisdom towards this one point. St. Paul had taught them that angels, and archangels, and all the invisible world were placed under Christ as their Creator, Conservator, Lord, and End; that he is the head and source, to them as well as to men, of reconciliation with God; that principalities and powers in the heavenly world were put under him, and that those in hell were "spoiled and made a shew of openly in the triumph of the cross."

These points are almost peculiar to this Epistle, and to the corresponding one to the Ephesians sent on to them probably from Laodicea.

And the strength of the apostle's language in condemning this angel-worship, which we are about to consider, has the same bearing. In speaking of the Mosaical rites, he had merely said, "Let no man judge you in meat or in drink," &c.; and the reason he assigned is simply, that they "are a shadow of things to come," of which the body is Christ.

But the worship of created beings as intercessors, instead of the incarnate and divine Saviour, was, in the apostle's mind, quite another thing; it was heathenism brought into the church; it was pagan philosophy engrafted upon the Christian faith; it was Belial united with Christ in the highest services of religion; it was angels and saints thrust into the place of the only Mediator; it was, in fact, the beginning of a system of idolatry infinitely more provoking to Almighty God than that of Greece and Rome, as being practised under the full blaze of the glorious gospel day.

The condemnation, therefore, proceeds on vital topics : on this worship springing from a wilful and perverse humility, and a presumptuous intrusion into the things of the invisible, and to us unknown world ; as the dictate of an inflated fleshly mind ; as the impious pretension of wisdom in an uncommanded way to an uncommanded end ; in a word, as actually cutting off and severing altogether its followers from Christ.

All this turns on fundamental matters, as did all the preparatory topics concerning the person and mediation of Christ, which occupy the first chapter and the former part of the present, and which were designed as the preventives of a further spread of the fatal errors which he was about expressly to condemn.

This is the apostle's divine method of crushing the first embryo of the serpent brood at Colosse. I mention it before I proceed, that I may express my fears that one reason why the recent invasion of semi-popish superstition and idolatry in our own church was not sooner checked, was that our manner of resisting it has not been more in the spirit of St. Paul. The capital doctrine of justification has not always been taught and defended as it ought. Baptism has been allowed to be far too indiscriminately extolled. The church has been unduly magnified, and the necessity of episcopacy, and what is called apostolical succession, to its existence, has been maintained in a most unscriptural manner. The glory of Christ as Mediator, Redeemer, and Reconciler, our "all and in all," has been obscured ; and the inconceivable abomination of all idolatry and angel-worship has not been fully exposed.

And it is with the humble desire of applying the apostle's exact and full course of argument in the case of the Colossians, as a guard against the remaining tendencies of this now condemned system amongst ourselves, that I have ventured on delivering these lectures for the benefit, as I hope, of the extensive dioceses with which I am connected.

But let us come to the verses now before us. In our

present and the three following lectures we shall have to enter into the main object of the apostle ; the scope of the Epistle lies here.

Let no man beguile you of your reward in a voluntary humility.

The apostle here exposes the artful manner adopted by the false teachers in introducing their worship of angels. They insinuated themselves by “beguiling words” and a perverse debasement of mind under the guise of *humility*.

This is the third time that St. Paul intimates that this great corruption would be a covert one, that all would be fair in appearance ; that men would profess the doctrine of Christ, teach many parts of the Gospel, and by no means oppose or deny in words the glory of the one Mediator ; but yet would sap all the addition of angel-worship ; that it would be, what popery, during its long, sad progress, has ever been, a “mystery of iniquity ;”² that is an iniquity, but a mystical one, being, as Archbishop Usher expresses himself, “cloaked with the name of piety.”

In the 4th verse of this chapter the apostle gave the first of these cautions. “This I say lest any man should beguile you with enticing words ;” and in the 8th, the second, “Beware lest any man spoil you,” (make a spoil of you,) “through philosophy and vain deceit ;” and now, for the third time, he repeats the special admonition.

When opposing circumcision, and meats and drinks, he uses no such cautions ; because there every thing was open and manifest. The circumcision was performed or it was not performed ; the meats were abstained from or they were eaten.

But the case was extremely different with the covert, insidious attacks of the zealots for the worship of angels.

The word translated, *beguile*, is rendered in the margin, “judge against you ;” as the arbiters in the Olympic and other games, when giving a dishonest decision, and so depriving the fair racer of his appropriate prize. Thus the de-

²) 2 Thess. ii. 7.

ceiving teachers at Colosse gave false directions, tending to award the crown to the wrong persons, and to defraud the diligent and earnest candidate of his reward, by transferring his aim and his efforts from the true object to a false one; from Christ to angel-mediators.

“A voluntary humility;” or “being a voluntary in humility,” was the other method of bringing in this heresy. A genuine humility is the very soil in which Christianity plants all its graces; but a wilful debasement of soul to human authority is the ground where Satan readily causes all kinds of follies and superstitions to grow and luxuriate. With these materials, the false teachers would set to work. Having to address a voluntary humility, they would discourse plausibly on the weakness of man and his distance from the Almighty, would dwell on the dignity, offices, and ranks of angels, and would presumptuously assert that to render them complete in knowledge, new revelations of the details of divine worship might be expected through them. In proof of the agency of angels in human affairs, they would tell them that the Mosaic law was given by “the disposition of angels,”³ and that angels conducted the Israelites into Canaan. They would appeal also to the appearances of angels to the patriarchs, prophets and apostles. They would mix abundance of extenuating and *beguiling words* on all these points, and work upon the ignorance and terrors of conscience of the weak. They would affirm that it was arrogant for feeble creatures like men to approach God directly through Jesus Christ, and that humility dictated their making use of the mediation of angels. They would pretend, also, that it was only an inferior honour they meant to pay them, and not the highest worship which was due peculiarly to God. They would philosophize on the differences between various kinds of religious worship; and distinguish between the entreating of the prayers and aids of angels and saints for them, and the addressing of petitions to them as capable of granting blessings themselves.

3) Acts vii. 53.

Such have been the harlot-sophistries of Rome from the beginning—"enticing words" addressed to a "false humility."

Having thus briefly noticed the seductive manner in which the idolatry was introduced, I come to consider at some length the important subject of the idolatry itself, which sprang from the worship of angels, as taught by the Jewish and philosophical doctors at Colosse.

Here I must call your attention to several particulars. I must advert to the opinions prevalent amongst the Jews, which gave occasion to angel-worship—to the doctrines of the Pagan philosophers on the subject—to the effects of these errors upon the Colossians—to the progress of the evil in the Church of Rome—to the series of prophecies concerning this idolatry in the Old and New Testaments—to the dangers consequent upon it with which we have been lately threatened in our own church—to the peculiar abomination of all idolatry in the sight of God, and to the manner in which it instantly corrupts every other part of religion.

1. The Jewish doctors at the time when the apostle wrote were very fond of speculating upon the orders and powers of the hierarchies of heaven. They had some peculiar notions among them relating to angels; for Josephus assures us that when they received any into their number, they made them swear that they would keep or observe the names of the angels with great care. Even as early as the Acts of the Apostles, there is a reference to the popular belief among the Jews; for when Rhoda affirmed that it was Peter who was before the gate, the apostles said, "It his angel."

And it appears from several passages in Philo to have been the opinion of that learned Jew, that angels were messengers who presented our prayers to God as well as brought down his favours to us. And he represents this view of the matter, exactly as our apostle intimates the seducers would, as most humble and reverential.

The term philosophy, was also in high repute with the

Jews; and both Philo and Josephus affected the use of it to express the whole Mosaical institution.

2. This being the state of things among the Jews, the unstable converts of that nation were only too well prepared to receive with favour the speculations of the heathen philosophy. The Platonists with their theories concerning the government of the world as carried on by beings inferior to the gods, but superior to men, whom they called demons, or angels, precisely met this tendency; as the discipline of Pythagoras did their love of ceremonies, of fastings and external austerities. The followers of Plato were, however, the more dangerous of the two, and are now before us. In his fourth book *de Legibus*, he teaches that after tutelary gods, demons or angels are to be worshipped. And in his *Epimomis* he says, "Demons ought to be worshipped, because they held the middle place between God and men, and discharged the office of interpreters. They are, therefore, to be worshipped on account of their propitious intercession." And St. Augustine inveighs against the heathen on this account in his tenth book *de Civitate Dei*, and condemns all they said about worshipping angels.*

But I dwell not on the particular names and doctrines of the philosophical sects, nor on the endless fancies of the Jewish teachers. If any of these had been prominently known amongst the Colossians, it is probable that the apostle would have named them.† His omission to do so, seems to show that he judged it best to leave his cautions in general terms, in order to be applicable to similar errors in all ages, and especially to the great apostacy.

3. With this mixture of Jewish and heathen inventions, we may imagine how the feeble Colossians would be disturbed.

* See *Poli Synopsis*, *Calv. in loc.* Davenant; Daillé; Suicer; Doddridge; Macknight, &c.

† As the Sacred Writers do the Pharisees and the Sadducees, the Herodians, the Stoics, the Epicureans, the Libertines and Cyrenians, the Nicolaitans; and even individuals, as Hymenæus and Philetus.

The plausible, "enticing words" of man's wisdom, and the plea of "humility," would first beguile them. The novelty of the doctrines would next attract and please. Then the half-hearted would rejoice to resume something of their heathen notions without seeming to reject Christianity. All would thus soon fall into confusion.

In our own native flocks in India, we know what difficulty we have to keep out the old remnants of heathen habits; what difficulty to eradicate the poisonous weeds of idolatrous usages and associations of thought. And if men of any talents and learning, but of unsound principles on vital points, should, with a show of piety, creep in amongst them, the feeble converts would be little able to detect their arts. And if the errors thus privily brought in should go to sap the mediation and grace of Christ, and should lead to angel-worship, to uncommanded austerities and a profound self-righteousness, we may imagine how soon Christianity would be thoroughly heathenized. Man is prone to idolatry, as we see in the case of the Israelites in the Old Testament. His fallen nature is propense to what is sensual, external, superstitious. He delights in a religion of his own. No idolatry is too gross for him if it be introduced by beguiling words, promote as it professes humility, and be generally received and practised. A golden calf, alas! is ever too popular a substitute for the invisible and all-glorious Mediator.

4. The progress of this one insidious principle of joint-mediators in the Christian church for twelve centuries or more, portentous as it is, is too easily accounted for.

The moment the Bible was given up as the only divine rule of faith, and justification by works was gradually admitted, idolatry began to steal in as doth a thief. Within one hundred years after these cautions of our apostle, the impiety had made some way. In the fourth century, the church of Laodicea, as I have already observed, had to condemn it, in the very region around Colosse, by an express

decree. About the same time Theodoret informs us that some were called "angelici," on the ground—the very voluntary humility noted by our apostle—that "God not being capable of being reached or comprehended, it was fit to conciliate the divine benevolence through angels." Theophylact tells us that the nature of the service rendered to them was that of prayer. Chrysostom speaks with indignation on the subject as arising from Satan's envying us our happiness; and he calls these acts of idolatry "the enchantments of devils;" and adds, "But though he be angel, though an archangel, though a cherubim, endure it not. For these powers themselves will not receive the worship, but reject it with abhorrence." So all the other devout and learned fathers, from Clement of Rome to Bernard. Still they helped on the evil upon the whole, by their own doctrine and practice. Augustine himself is no exception to this remark. And early in the seventh century it opened into the twofold apostacy of Mahomet in the east, and of the Papacy in the west. The way of both was prepared by the extreme corruptions of the Christian doctrine in this and other respects; the prevalent ignorance and vices of the flocks; and especially by the widespread and insidious idolatry of angels and saints, of the Virgin, of images and relics, and the sacred bread and wine in what is termed the sacrifice of the mass. These gave plausibility to the Mahometan imposture, which protested against all idolatry, both amongst Christians and Gentiles. Whilst, on the other hand, they gave apt occasion to the Bishop of Rome gradually to mature his system, in spite of the loud rebukes of the pious fathers of different ages, till the whole was solemnly established by the second Council of Nice, 787, A. D., and ratified and enlarged at that of Trent in the sixteenth century.

5. Our abhorrence of all this saint-worship will be strengthened by considering the solemn and copious predictions of the sacred Scriptures of an apostacy centering in this point. For we find that a series of concurrent prophe-

cies, from Daniel in the Old Testament to the last book of the New, foretell the rise and progress of this idolatry, with details which cannot be mistaken. And we learn, also, that from the time of the Waldenses and Albigenses in the twelfth century, to our reformers in the sixteenth, these prophecies were with one voice declared to be descriptive of the bishop and church of Rome. The glorious Reformation, led on by Luther and Cranmer, Zuingle and Jewel, Melancthon and Calvin, and their compeers, fixed on this one broad ground of condemnation, the vituperative predictions of Daniel, St. Paul, and St. John. The grand characteristic of the Papacy, in all their judgments, was the worship of saints and angels as joint mediators with Christ. They considered the fourth and fifth centuries as having matured this demonolatrour abomination. And our modern Protestant divines, with one consent, suppose that the mystic period of twelve hundred and sixty years is to be dated from the kings of the earth having given over their power to the papal usurpation with its idolatrous worship.*

In the Papacy, as they justly think, we have the “wilful king” of Daniel rising up amongst the ten kingdoms of the Roman empire, having a mouth that spake very great things, whose look was more stout than his fellows; who spake great words against the most High, wearing out the saints, and thinking to change times and laws; discountenancing married life or “desire of women;” magnifying himself above every god; speaking marvellous things against the God of gods; causing craft to prosper in his hands, having eyes like a man, and honouring in his estate Muazzim, or gods protectors—the very angel-worship which is the head and front of his corruptions.⁴

* Mr. Mede, Sir Isaac Newton, Bishop Newton, Bishop Hurd, Dr. Samuel Clarke, Bishop Warburton, Mr. Davison, Mr. Faber, and now Mr. Elliott, together with our greatest and most learned commentators, Poole, Lowth, Henry, Doddridge, Macknight, Scott, and a host of others of all classes and all periods, from the Reformation to the present period.

St. Paul they unanimously consider to have taken up again the thread of prophecy after an interval of about six hundred years from Daniel, and given the self-same features, somewhat more detailed, in the "Man of sin," the "Wicked one," "the Son of perdition," the Head of the "falling away," or apostacy, who was to appear when the secular Roman empire was divided into ten kingdoms, (about A. D. 476,) and so no longer "withheld or letted" his development, who was to sit "in the temple of God," and oppose and exalt himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped, "showing himself that he is God;" whose "coming was to be after the working of Satan, with all power and signs and lying wonders, and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness;" and whose astonishing success should arise from "God sending upon those, who received not the love of truth, a strong delusion" (the energy of error is the exact meaning) "that they should believe a lie." The grand point of the corruption they consider to be precisely the same. "He sits as God in the temple of God," imposing his own sense upon the Scriptures, claiming infallibility, tyrannizing over the conscience, and "showing himself that he is God,"⁵ i. e. by directing men to idolatry and the worship of saints on his own authority.

Ten or twelve years after this statement to the Colossians, he resumes his predictions in his Epistle to Timothy, and speaks once more of the great departure from the faith which would take place in the latter days, when men would "give heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of devils, or demons; speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their conscience seared with a hot iron; forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats."⁶ Doctrines of demons or angels and saints, i. e. idolatry, is again the head of the predicted falling away.

What more? St. John, thirty years after St. Paul, gives the final course of prophecies concerning the apostacy for

5) 1 Thess. ii. 1-12.

6) 1 Tim. iv. 1-3.

the warning of the church, still confirming the predictions of Daniel and St. Paul. He describes the same power as Daniel, under the emblem of a beast, having a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies; who made war with the saints, and overcame them; having two horns like a lamb, but speaking as a dragon; doing great wonders, and deceiving men by the miracles which he did.⁷

He also, to complete the picture, describes this power further as a great harlot riding on a scarlet-decked beast, appearing with meretricious pomp, in purple, gold, and precious stones, drunken with the blood of the saints of Jesus, ruling over many kingdoms which give her with one mind their power and strength, until the words of God shall be fulfilled; corrupting the faith with a golden cup of abominations and filthiness of fornication, (the usual term in the Old Testament for the infidelity and idolatry of the Jews,) and only ending her seductions when, at the predicted period, the kingdoms shall suddenly turn against her, and hate her, and make her desolate.⁸

The prophecy further indicates that the woman is that great city which "sits upon seven mountains," and "reigneth over the kings of the earth." When the Book of Revelations was written, about A. D. 96, as it has been well observed, the name of Rome would not have been more determinate. Nor can it be doubted that papal and pagan Rome is intended. For pagan Rome was dissolved before the ten kingdoms arose amongst which the woman appeared; and it is a spiritual power that is spoken of as "sitting in the temple of God;" and pagan Rome could not be said to corrupt the faith which she had never received.

These harmonious prophecies, which occupy by far the largest part of the whole series in either Testament, are calculated to give us an awful impression of the magnitude of the evil and of the importance attached to it by the Almighty.

7) Rev. xiii.

8) Rev. xvii.

We shall next have to support the view we have taken by the actual doctrines of the Romish Church, gathered from her authorized documents and her universal practice at this day ; and then proceed to point out the imminent danger in our own church, from the tendencies of which it is the object of these Lectures to guard our Protestant clergy and flocks in India : concluding this sketch of the wide-spread idolatry springing from the incipient *worship of angels* which our apostle condemns, by showing the peculiar abomination of all idolatry in the sight of God, and the manner in which it instantly corrupts every other part of religion.

LECTURE XXII.

IDOLATRY OF THE CHURCH OF ROME.

COL. ii. 18, 19.

18. *Let no man beguile you of your reward in a voluntary humility and worshipping of angels, intruding into those things which he hath not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind.*

19. *And not holding the Head, from which all the body by joints and bands having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God.*

WE now come to the doctrines and practices of the Church of Rome, and of those who imitate her. Whether the prophetic word has been applied justly to that church in all its exact details or not, will not affect the plain historical question on which we are now entering. What is the matter of fact ? Is the bishop and court of Rome idolatrous ? Does the Tractarian system lean towards that corrupt church ?

In considering this question, the simplest course perhaps will be, First, to produce the actual language of the Council

of Trent. Then to appeal to the succinct and plain-spoken creed of Pope Pius 4th. Thirdly, to give a specimen of the mass of evidence as to the prevalent idolatry corresponding with these sources. Fourthly, to show that our Tractators lean the same way, Lastly, to point out the peculiar provocation of all idolatry, or any thing having the appearance of it, in the eyes of the Almighty. This will close this division of our subject.

1. In the last session of the Council of Trent we read thus: "The holy synod commands all bishops and others who have the care and charge of teaching, that, according to the practice of the Catholic and Apostolic Church received from the first beginning of the Christian religion, the consent of venerable fathers, and the decrees of holy councils, they labour with diligent assiduity, to instruct the faithful concerning the invocation and intercession of the saints, the honour due to relics, and the lawful use of images; teaching them that the saints, who reign together with Christ, offer their prayers to God for man; that it is a good and useful thing suppliantly to invoke them, and to flee to their prayers, help, and assistance, because of the benefits bestowed by God, through his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, who is our only Redeemer and Saviour; and that those are men of impious sentiments who deny that the saints, who enjoy eternal happiness in heaven, are to be invoked; or who affirm that they do not pray for men, or that to beseech them to pray for us is idolatry, or that it is contrary to the word of God, and opposed to the honour of Jesus Christ, the one Mediator between God and men, or that it is foolish to supplicate, verbally or mentally, those who reign in heaven.

"Let them teach, also, that the holy bodies of the holy martyrs and others living with Christ, whose bodies were living members of Christ, are to be venerated by the faithful, since by them God bestows many benefits upon men. So that they are to be wholly condemned" . . . "who affirm that veneration and honour are not due to the relics of the

saints, or that it is a useless thing that the faithful should honour these and other sacred monuments, and that the memorials of the saints are in vain frequented to obtain their help and assistance.

“Moreover, let them teach that the images of Christ, of the Virgin, Mother of God, and of other saints, are to be had and retained, especially in churches, and due honour and veneration rendered to them. Not that it is believed that any divinity or power resides in them, on account of which they are to be worshipped, or that any benefit is to be sought from them, or any confidence placed in images, as was formerly by the Gentiles, who fixed their hope in idols. But the honour with which they are regarded is referred to those who are represented by them; so that we adore Christ, and venerate the saints whose likenesses these images bear, when we kiss them and uncover our heads in their presence, and prostrate ourselves. All which has been sanctioned by the decrees of councils against the impugnors of images, especially the second Council of Nice.

“Let the bishops teach further, that” . . . “great advantages are derived from all sacred images.” “Whoever shall teach or think in opposition to these decrees, let him be accursed.”

Upon this I remark generally, that we may be quite sure that the most wary caution was observed in this decree, as in all the others, to avoid, so far as they could, an open patronage of what had given most scandal to the Protestant princes and people, and to present the best aspect of the Romish doctrine of invocation before the eyes of awakened Europe, which would consist with their old claims of antiquity and infallibility, and carry out most craftily the determination of the council to admit of no real change whatever in the usages and practice of their church.

Next we simply ask what would be, in the nature of things, the effect of this decree, subtle and ambiguous as it is, on the ignorant and superstitious mass of the populations

of Romish countries, after twelve centuries of human traditions and superstitions, of the suppression of the Scriptures, and of the doctrine of justification by works, and profound ignorance of the real nature of Christianity? Let Italy, let Spain and Portugal—let the Romanist parts of Germany and Switzerland—let France declare, with their ten thousand prayers offered to the Virgin and saints, for one presented to Christ the divine and only Mediator.

The case speaks for itself. This doctrine of the decree on the invocation of saints, and the veneration of images and relics, as well as that of a previous decree on transubstantiation, and the adoration of the host, would and must be interpreted, of course, according to the superstitious mind of the Roman Catholic priesthood and people at the time, and for ages preceding; and was no doubt intentionally left to be so interpreted.

But we may, in truth, gather enough from the words of the decree itself to condemn it as altogether unscriptural and idolatrous.

For the authority of the invocation enjoined is derived, not from Holy Scripture, but from the practice of the church, with a mere incidental denial, towards the close, of its being contrary to the word of God.

Then, it gives no definition of the terms it employs; “honour,” “lawful use,” “due honour and veneration;” these important expressions are abandoned to a well-understood and long-established corrupt usage.

Next, the directions “suppliantly to invoke the saints;” and “to flee to them for their help and assistance,” are of themselves and under all circumstances idolatrous.

So the incidental permission given to “kiss” the images of the Virgin and saints, to “uncover their heads” in their presence, and to “prostrate themselves” before them, are plain acts of idolatry and violations of the second commandment.

Again, the miserable plea that the honour paid to images

is only intended for the persons they represent, is precisely the excuse which the heathens made for the worship of their idols ; and leaves the breach of the divine law as gross as before.

Once more, the attempt to distinguish between images and idols, only plunges the council deeper in the gulf ; for the commandment prohibits universally “the likeness of any thing.” Such a distinction without a difference is a confession of guilt.

Lastly, the decree by uniting “the invocation of saints” with the “honour due to relics ;” “the veneration of the bodies of martyrs ;” the frequenting of “their monuments,” and the “due honour and veneration of the images of the images of the Virgin Mary and other saints,” makes up an entire system of idolatrous worship, every part of which is, of itself, in the teeth of the express terms of the second commandment, and the whole augmented in intensity of influence by the combination.

2. But I proceed to the articles, which in 1564, Pope Pius 4th appended to the ancient and most scriptural Niceno-Constantipolitan creed ; so that every person swearing to receive and obey it, as he is required to do, gives the self-same pledge to believe the thirteen appended doctrines as the previous pure ones of the original symbol. It is sufficient for me to give a specimen.

“I steadfastly admit and embrace apostolical and ecclesiastical traditions, and all other observances and constitutions of the same church.”

“I constantly hold that there is a purgatory, and that the souls there detained are aided by the prayers of the faithful.”

“In like manner, that the saints, reigning together with Christ, are to be venerated and invoked, and that they offer prayers to God for us, and that their relics are to be venerated.”

“I most firmly declare that the images of Christ and of the Mother of God always a Virgin, and also of the other saints,

are to be kept and retained ; and that due honour and veneration is to be shown them."

"Also I undoubtedly receive and profess all other things delivered down, defined and declared by the several canons and ecumenical councils, and especially by the most sacred synod of Trent ; and I equally condemn, reject, and anathematize all things contrary to them."

"This true Catholic faith, without which no one can be saved, which I now willingly profess and truly hold, I promise, vow, and swear to retain and confess, by God's help, most constantly to the very end of life ; and to take care, so far as in me lieth, that it be taught, held and preached to my subjects, or to those, the care of whom, from my office, rests on me. So help me God and these holy gospels of God."

Not a word need be added upon the unparalleled effrontery of appending these clauses to the Nicene creed, and of their nature and bearing. I only further observe, that the appeal of the synod of Trent to the second council of Nice, in 787 A.D., is sufficient of itself, to any one acquainted with the history of that image-worshipping council, to convict the whole decree, as well as these new clauses founded on it, of intentional and unblushing worship of the saints.

3. A specimen of the mass of evidence as to the prevalent idolatry, flowing through all the divisions of the church from the fifth century downwards, and corresponding with these artful and dangerous documents, may be very briefly given.

The child in its earliest age is imbued with it—it is taught to say, "I conclude" (my prayer) "by desiring our blessed Lady to be a mother to me, and by recommending myself to my good angel, and to all the court of heaven." *

It is directed again to "offer its prayers to the blessed Virgin ; its guardian angels ; its patron ; and all the saints together." †

* Abstract of Douay Catechism, apud Cramp.

† Catholic School Book, apud id.

Further rules for it are these: "If you will be a true child, and a sincere servant of the blessed Virgin, you must be careful to perform four things. 1. Have a great apprehension of displeasing her by mortal sin. 2. Love and imitate her virtues. 3. Have recourse to her in all your spiritual necessities; and for that end offer to her daily some particular prayers. 4. Be mindful to invoke her in temptations," . . . "you can find no succour more ready and favourable than hers. If you perform this, you will have a true devotion to the blessed Virgin; you will be of the number of her real children, and she will be your mother, under whose protection you shall never perish."*

The child is further provided with this form of confession: "I confess to Almighty God; to blessed Mary ever Virgin, to blessed Michael the archangel, to blessed John the Baptist, to the holy apostles Peter and Paul, and to all the saints, that I have sinned exceedingly, in thought, word, and deed, through my fault, through my fault, through my most grievous fault. Therefore, I beseech the blessed Mary ever Virgin, blessed Michael the archangel, blessed John the Baptist, the holy apostles Peter and Paul, and all the saints, to pray to the Lord our God for me."†

So much for the Roman Catholic infant mind. A specimen or two of the prayers ordinarily addressed to the saints and angels will now suffice.

"Grant, we beseech thee, O Lord God, that we, thy servants, may enjoy perpetual health of mind and body, by the glorious intercession of blessed Mary ever Virgin."‡

We fly to thy patronage, O holy mother of God; despise not our petitions in our necessities, but deliver us from all evil; O ever glorious and blessed Virgin!"§

* Catholic School Book, apud. Cramp.

† Christian Doctrine for Roman Catholics of Vicariate of Bengal. Calcutta, 1839, p. 4.

‡ Breviary, apud Cramp.

§ Litany of our Lady of Loretto. Ibid.

The present Pope, in his Encyclical letter of 1832, in his closing paragraph, uses the following words: "But that all may have a successful and happy issue, let us raise our eyes to the most blessed Virgin Mary who alone destroys heresies, who is our greatest hope, yea, the entire ground of our hope."*

If this be not the grossest idolatry, nothing is. If all this do not overturn, root and branch, the mediation of Christ, nothing can. If all this, continuing for twelve or more centuries, extending over all Eastern as well as Western Christendom, but especially Western; forming the staple and mass of popish devotions; and diffusing itself for ages in all accessible parts of the Christian world, and in all their missions to the heathen, do not display the full-blown abominations of which the apostle condemns, in the epistle we are considering, the first buddings in a *voluntary humility and worship of angels*, nothing can.

But, no; the matter is plain and manifest to all who understand the meaning of words, and the broad, undeniable facts of the case. Every prayer addressed to the Virgin and saints is idolatry; every act of such veneration and honour in connexion with them is idolatry; all the bowings and uncoverings of the head, and the prostration before images and pictures, and the bodies of martyrs and relics, are idolatry. Every adoration of the elements in the Eucharist is idolatry. The very popular excuse made by the Romanists that they only pray to the saints to intercede with God for them, is precisely that which most especially condemns the practice, as it robs Christ of his mediatorial office, and denies that we are *complete in him*.

But the whole soul of a Christian trembles at such blasphemy. Christ is "all and in all" to him. Christ is high as God, and needs none to come between; for "he and the Father are one;" he is low as man, and needs none to come

* Cramp, p. 358.

between ; for we are “ members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones.”

This worship of saints and angels, then, thus idolatrous in all its parts, is, I repeat, the grand abomination of popery. There are many steps leading to it, some more remotely, others more directly ; but this is the last practical finish, as in the case of the nations of Israel and Judah of old, of the whole series of previous provocations.

I confess, when I contrast this tremendous structure of demonolatry with its feeble origin, its insidious but steady growth, its fatal ramifications into all the details of religious worship ; its prevalence for so many ages over the larger part of Christendom ; its present zealous and aggressive character ; the devotion of its adherents ; and its hold, by a judicial blindness, as it were, on the minds of the wealthy, the learned, the powerful, the renowned of all classes from the prince to the peasant ; I seem to behold the gigantic monster stand out in full relief, whom the series of predictions, to which we have before adverted, so exactly portrayed. Indeed, it would appear to me abstractedly a most unlikely thing, considering the general scheme of divine prophecy in all its other branches, that sixteen or seventeen centuries of such a portentous and insidious opposition to Christ and his glorious mediation, should have been unnoticed in the sacred records. And the strenuous but vain efforts of Roman Catholic writers to turn away these predictions from their seven-hilled city, abundantly confirm, as I think, the application of them, arising from the broad and undoubted historical facts of the case which I have now adduced.

LECTURE XXIII.

TENDENCY OF OXFORD TRACTARIANISM TOWARDS POPERY.

COL. II. 18, 19.

18. *Let no man beguile you of your reward in a voluntary humility and worshipping of angels, intruding into those things which he hath not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind.*

19. *And not holding the Head, from which all the body by joints and bands having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God.*

It is a mournful but imperative duty to turn, as we proposed, in the next place, to the evident tendency of the system of our Tract writers to favour popery, notwithstanding its worship of saints and angels, and infuse its spirit into our pure Protestant church.

Very little, alas, need be said on this melancholy and disgraceful subject. The rapid sketch we have given of the vast structure of the papacy, is sufficient to put us upon our guard against any systematic favour displayed towards it. And it was for this end that I took that view. Besides, the mighty evil is confessed; and, thank God, has been checked, as we have already observed, by the concurrent judgment of a majority of our bishops, by the decisive stand made by the University where the Tracts first appeared, by the masterly writings of our distinguished divines, by the piety and faithful preaching and prayers of a large proportion of our clergy, and by the alarm justly spread among the pious and most attached members of the laity of our church.

Still the inundation has been so wide and deep, and has extended itself so far, that, notwithstanding the barrier which has been reared, we have to fear the reflux of the back waters, as it were, of the torrent.

Let us consider, then, the dangers we have escaped, and only just escaped.

It is enough for us that these writers, in the whole series of the Tracts and their other publications for ten or eleven years, have been engaged in lauding popery ; sighing after re-union with her ; lessening the differences between her doctrines and those of our reformed church ; checking the old and salutary dread of her corruptions in the popular mind ; describing her as the " Saviour's holy home," and declaring that she, and she only, retains the true, uncurtailed Catholic faith.

It is enough for us that they have at the same time been reviling the blessed Reformers, upbraiding one of the most eminent of them, Jewel, as an irreverent dissenter ; declaring that the Reformation was a guilty, schismatical act, mutilating the tradition of 1,500 years ; that it was an upas tree and incubus on the church, and a judgment upon us for our sins ; and that their aim is to unprotestantize the Church of England.

All this is more than sufficient for my argument. Out of their own mouth I judge them. They have written themselves down. I need assume nothing more as the basis of my remonstrance than what they profess and glory in, a disposition to union with Rome, a favourable aspect towards her, and a palliation of her general system. This is enough. The rest all follows. If Rome be what she is, a leaning towards her can have but one result.

But I stop not here. The case is too important. I must briefly remind you once again * of the system in some of its principles and practices, familiarly as you know them, in order that the frightful dangers which were impending over us may be better known.

We may first call to mind that the original scheme of the chief writers has been published, based on the grossly unscriptural doctrine, that the way of salvation is the partaking of the body and blood of Christ in the Eucharist.

* For I have entered pretty much into the detail in my Charges of 1838 and 1842, and my Ordination Sermon of 1841.

Again, we cannot forget that the too celebrated Tract No. 90, avowed the jesuitical design of showing that there is no irreconcilable opposition between the thirty-nine Articles and the leading principles of the Church of Rome, to oppose which these articles were drawn up.

Further, the former gentle condemnations of some Romanist practices and doctrines, which had been boasted of as a proof that the system had no leanings towards that church, have been publicly retracted, whilst the vituperations vented against our own Protestant Church have been allowed to stand.

You will recollect, moreover, that these writers have followed step by step the example of Rome in their downward progress. They have descended by the way of tradition; justification by inherent righteousness; interpretation, or rather misinterpretation of holy Scripture by the glosses of the fathers; reliance on the sacraments, and not faith, for salvation; depreciation of the preaching of the blessed Gospel; magnifying of forms and ceremonies; denying almost communion with God, except by means of the Eucharist, wishing for the restoration of Latin prayers, maintaining the necessity of reserve in proclaiming the atonement, insisting that implicit faith is enough for salvation, and talking constantly about apostolical succession, church principles, and catholic doctrine, as if our Reformers had not settled in our Articles, Liturgy, and Homilies, what is to all their members, their determined definition of what is catholic and what is not. They have been aiming, also, in the mean time, at the external show, gaudy display of crosses, genuflections, and other pageantry of Rome.

Again, they have laboured with Bossuet and Pastorini and other popish writers, to turn aside all the stream of divine prophecy, with whatever absurdity of interpretation, from the Roman Church; whilst Rome itself is triumphing in their writings, and has already received a number of accessions to her corrupt body from among their disciples, and

anticipates the subjugation of our Protestant nation and church.

A pamphlet,* lastly, has been published by a person of great consideration in the party, admitting, the strong tendency to Rome in their later writings, and withdrawing from any further connexion with them. That pamphlet is, indeed, deplorably defective; for it attempts to defend the series of Tracts, and even No. 90. Still the acknowledgment of the Romish tendency of the extreme writers is only so much the more important.

Such being the manifest and admitted principles and tendencies of these divines, I proceed at once to the doctrine of the invocation of saints, which we shall find to be included in their imitation of the apostate Roman Church; this is more than leaning to it generally, (which is all my argument requires,) it is plunging into the thickest of its abominations.

Accordingly, they gave a history of the Romish breviary, calculated to raise our esteem for it.

They say our Prayer Book has no claims of respect which the breviary and missal have not in a far higher degree.

They declare that the canon of the mass, full of idolatrous invocations as it is, is one of the four ancient forms of liturgy which cannot be too much extolled. They maintain that we may venerate and worship the saints and their images, if we can only avoid certain irregularities and disorders which the Council of Trent itself also, as they tell us, condemns.

The intercessory prayer, *ora pro nobis*, they consider defensible, and not included in the compass of our article against the invocations of saints.

They account people injudicious who talk against the Roman Catholics, for worshipping saints and honouring the Virgin and images,—they cannot make up their minds that they are idolatrous.

And as to the the thirteen appended articles of Pope Pius

* By the Rev. Mr. Palmer, of Worcester Coll. Oxford.

IV., that is, the whole essence of popery in a condensed form, they content themselves with just saying that they cannot think them all to be necessary to salvation.*

All this is bad enough. But they have gone further; they have published what they term selections from the popish breviary for the use of us Protestants in our private devotions.

From these selections I give the following specimens:—The Virgin Mary is thus prayed to: “Holy Mary, succour the wretched, help the weak-hearted; comfort the mourners, pray for the people; interpose for the clergy; intercede for the devoted females; let all feel this assistance who observed thy holy commemoration. Pray for us, Holy Mother of God!” And this in a devotional work for us Protestants!

Again, as to the martyrs, they give us a service for the festival of St. Lawrence on August 10th; and a more detailed and regular service with matins and nocturns for Ken, a nonjuring bishop, deprived at the period of the glorious Revolution of 1688.

To the martyr Lawrence they first thus address themselves: “Blessed Lawrence, martyr of Christ, intercede for us!” And then, what is yet more insulting, they insert the following colloquy:

“Reader.—Sir, pray for a blessing.” “Minister.—May he, whose festival we keep, intercede for us to the Lord.”

Where you will observe that the reader is a person in one of the lower orders of the Romish Church, and he here begs the priest to pray for a blessing; and his request is an-

* I need not remind the reader that the learned and able works of Bishop M'Ilvaine, Mr. Goode, Professor Garbett, Mr. Faber, Mr. Bird, and Bishop O'Brien, and others, have silenced the Tractarian writers at least—for no answers have been attempted. The admirable series of reviews in the *Christian Observer* and *Monthly Churchman* have, moreover, followed up the developments of the system with a talent and power of reasoning which demand the warmest thanks of all the faithful in our church.

swered, not by the priest making a prayer to Almighty God, but by his offering up the requested prayer to Lawrence, that he would grant the blessing by interceding for us to the Lord.

But their disingenuousness equals their other deplorable errors; for in the preface to these selections they object to four antiphons to the Virgin as not capable of defence; though in truth they differ not at all from those which they have retained; and yet they actually insert one of their own rejected antiphons in the work after all, with simply the words *lege cauté* in the margin. Why should the abominations allowed to be indefensible in the preface, be thus obtruded on the Protestant Christian's eye, except as a snare?

To add one single word of comment to all this, would be to lessen the horror it must excite in every pious breast; and yet all I was required to prove was the general leaning of these divines towards Rome! It appears, however, that they have not only a leaning towards her, but have actually embraced her worst idolatries.

But I shall be reminded that after showing the tendency of the Tractarians towards the Romish church, I was to point out the peculiar abomination of all idolatry in the sight of Almighty God, and the manner in which it instantly corrupts every other part of religion. But I shrink from the task. For wherefore should I urge on you, Christians and fellow-Protestants, the infinite abhorrence of the one living and true God to all this creature-worship, or any thing approaching to it? Why should I caution you against allowing familiarity, for these few years past, with forms of extenuation, to lessen your dread of the guilt of such idolatry? Wherefore should I call to your recollection the large proportion of the entire Old Testament, which is occupied with declarations of God's hatred of such apostacy? Why remind you of the proneness of fallen man to it, as shown in the history of the ancient people of God? Why the perpetual anger of God lighting upon them for it? Why repeat the constant and most vehe-

ment expostulations of the prophets as to this particular provocation? Why the denunciations of it as spiritual fornication and an adulterous breach of a marriage covenant, and the occasion of a divorce between God and them?

Why, again, should I appeal to St. Paul's first chapter to the Romans for a development of the sources of a similar idolatry amongst the heathen, and of the "reprobate mind" to which the Almighty in righteous judgment resigned them, and of the certain danger of the divine vengeance on the tenfold more aggravated idolatry of Christians?

The object of worship is, in truth, the centre-point of our religion. All the doctrines and blessings—all the hopes and joys—all the morals and purity of Christianity flow from the infinite glory and holiness of the divine character, and the exclusive worship which he claims.

And why do I urge this particular topic, which ought to be so familiar to us all? Because two things constantly attend this crime—a stupefaction of conscience that renders men insensible of their guilt, and quite unaware of the gulf into which they have plunged—"having their conscience seared as with a hot iron," is the divine threatening—and also a laxity of morals as to all great points, with an austerity as to petty observances, which sinks into a debased superstition as to the common people, and a secret infidelity as to the higher classes. So that every part of vital Christianity is swept away at once. All falls to ruin, if the object of worship be once changed.

And what are all the natural and moral attributes of the Deity? what his creation and government of the world? what his providence? what his infinite love in sending his own Son into the world for our salvation, but so many aggravations of the guilt of such attempts as these at "worshipping and serving the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever?"

And what, again, ought all the redemption of Christ—what his incarnation, his atonement, his death, his ascension,

his intercession, his whole mediatorial office and kingdom to be to us, but so many effectual bars against the flying to any mediator but himself, and so many valid arguments for his exclusive claim to all the worship, trust, love, and obedience of those who would have access to their heavenly Father?

And how is all this increased beyond conception by the love wherewith he hath loved us in this work of redemption, the depth of humiliation and the inexpressible intenseness of suffering which he underwent, and his condescension and tenderness to all who come to him? Who can measure the degree in which the guilt of having recourse to other mediators, is rendered the more prodigious and more highly provoking to his divine Majesty by these considerations?

Let us, then, imbibe more fully the infinite and unapproachable glory of our one blessed Mediator; and every appearance of idolatry will be hateful to us. Let us imbibe more fully the adequacy and suitableness to all our wants of his intercession and high-priesthood; and every attempt to substitute other mediators will appear to us in the startling glare of its frightful folly, ingratitude and guilt.

Thus let us follow our apostle in this main point of the verses we are considering, and of his whole epistle, and cleave to Christ "the image of the invisible God;" to Christ the "hope of glory;" to Christ "the Head of the church;" to Christ our "all and in all;" Christ in whom it hath "pleased the Father that all fulness should dwell," and "in whom we are complete" for all the parts of our salvation, for time and eternity.

NOTE.—The Roman Catholic commentators corrupt every text of Scripture which they think makes against them. Any gloss of any one or two of the fathers is sufficient for their purpose. They attempt accordingly to explain away the expression, "the worship of angels," (verse 18,) as not relating to the worship paid to them; but to the Mosaic economy and worship accompanied by angels; on the authority of Tertullian and others.

But this is intolerable. The ellipsis is unnecessary, harsh, and unwarranted in the New Testament. There is no similar one. When the apostle would speak of the angels as "ministering spirits," in connexion with the Mosaic law, he expresses himself in quite another way: "Who have received the law by the disposition of angels."¹ "It was ordained by angels in the hands of a Mediator."² Nor can any thing solid be advanced against the obvious and ordinary meaning of the words. (1.) They suit exactly with the context. (2.) Flow directly from the Voluntary humility, Will-worship, Intruding into things not seen, and the being puffed up with a fleshly mind, of which the apostle afterwards speaks. (3.) They agree also with the grounds on which the apostle condemns the error he has in view, as severing us from Christ our head. (4.) They fall in again with the whole preparatory course of the apostle's argument and instructions in the former part of the epistle. (5.) Further, they exactly develop the philosophy and vain deceit of the eighth verse of this second chapter, as verses 11 to 17, and 20 to 23, do the other particulars there summarily given. (6.) The facts also of the Platonic philosophy being current, and of the worship of angels having prevailed, after the death of the apostles, for centuries in Colosse and the neighbouring parts, favour the received interpretation.

On the contrary, this Roman perversion is (1) harsh and unsupported. (2.) It makes the apostle use a tautology foreign to his manner; for verses 18 and 19 are then nothing but the argument of verses 16 and 17 repeated, and in less clear terms. (3.) The vain philosophy of verse 8 is not developed as all the other things condemned in that brief summary are. (4.) Voluntary humility, will-worship, &c., have nothing to which they respond. (5.) The transition from the *meats and drinks, and the shadow of things to come*, to something further, which is clearly intimated, is defeated; for the apostle proceeds to no different topic. (6.) The not holding the Head also becomes, in this connexion, an inappropriate ground of condemnation. (7.) Further, in the apostle's discussions of errors respecting the Mosaic ceremonies in the Epistle to the Galatians or elsewhere, no allusion is made to angels in the sense here contended for.

Every thing thus concurs to uphold the received interpretation, and to lead us to reject, without a moment's hesitation, this popish evasion.

I need say nothing about the old quibble of Douleia and Latreia; (a lower religious worship, and a higher;) as neither the decree of Trent nor Pope Pius's creed adverts to it. Both are unquestionably due only to God. All kinds and degrees of the worship of angels is forbidden by our apostle. Bishop Davenant cites a curious passage from Bellarmine, which confirms our interpretation of the above expression, whilst it attempts to

1) Acts vii. 53.

2) Gal. iii. 19.

excuse the Romanists in what he confesses is apparently against the apostle's prohibition.

"This heresy of Simon Magus was, that certain angels were to be adored as lesser gods, because they made the world; but this doth not affect the Catholics, as they only render to them Douleia, a worship inferior to divine."*

LECTURE XXIV.

PRESUMPTION AND FEARFUL CONSEQUENCES OF ANGEL AND SAINT WORSHIP.

COL. ii. 18, 19.

18. *Let no man beguile you of your reward in a voluntary humility and worshipping of angels, intruding into those things which he hath not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind.*

19. *And not holding the Head, from which all the body by joints and bands having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God.*

WE are still engaged in our apostle's condemnation of the most fatal of the corruptions beginning to appear at Colosse, saint-worship. This corruption we dwell on at the greater length, because it is, as we think, the centre point of the whole epistle. We have already shown the manner of the introduction of this incipient evil amongst the Colossians—its fearful progress in the western church, till, at the second Council of Nice, and the Synod of Trent, the full-blown idol-worship was established. The copious prophecies also of this apostacy have been adverted to; and the proofs of the present doctrines and practices of the Church of Rome exhibited from her acknowledged formularies. We have proceeded also to the melancholy task of showing the strong

* Dav. in loc.

leaning to popery, including the invocation of angels and saints, which has marked more and more, in rapid progression, the writings of the Tractarian divines.

We now go on to the specific grounds of the apostle's condemnation of this demonolatrous worship ; and shall afterwards have to consider, as we proposed, his judgment on the third class of corruptions at Colosse flowing from it ; namely, the austerities imposed, without a pretence of divine authority, by the Judaizing, Platonizing, and Pythagorizing doctors ; which will bring us to St. Paul's description of the real method of man's sanctification, as contrasted with all this superstition, by rising with Christ from an earthly and idolatrous religion, and setting our affections on him as our only Mediator, at the right hand of the Majesty on high.

Some appearance of controversial discussion is unavoidable in the progress of our high argument. We must place the monster abomination in its true light. We must not allow general objections to theological debate, and demands for a false peace to prevail on us to give those evils, by our silence, the time to work themselves again unobserved into the minds of our younger clergy. The peace of Christ must be founded on the truth of Christ. It is otherwise treachery to our Master's cause. The Jesuits have been complaining for three centuries that they have been misunderstood. Dr. Wiseman does the same up to this moment. We must not, therefore, wonder that the Tract divines follow them in this as in other things. But we must not suffer general reluctance to controversy which pious men most justly feel, to repress our boldness for Christ on a great occasion like the present. We must, as Elijah with the priests of Baal, or the prophets from Isaiah to Malachi, with their idolatrous contemporaries, as our blessed Lord with the Scribes and Pharisees, or St. Paul with the Galatians, "stand forth on the Lord's side," and "quit ourselves like men." We must take care, indeed, in doing this, not to exaggerate facts, not to impute motives, not to proceed on mere reports or rumours,

not to be betrayed into the least personality or acrimony ; much less to shut up the way of a return to the paths of the Gospel to those who have been partially drawn aside ; on the contrary, we must ever “ speak the truth in love.” And, above all, we must connect what we say in condemnation of error with a direct and clear exposition of the person and glory of Christ as the only Mediator and Intercessor ; and then in a spirit of humble prayer to God for his grace and blessing, we must “ contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints.” It is the crisis of our Protestant church. The Reformation was gained by a public and decided avowal of the truth of the Gospel, and an unshrinking protest against the idolatry of Rome. Human enactments followed in the wake of this faithful testimony ; but did not precede it. It was the tone of the public mind, awakened by the Scriptures, that led to the laws which established the Reformation in various other countries, and, above all, in our own. The pulpit and the press must retain what they then won.

I speak thus because the ground of our apostle’s condemnation of the angel-worship at Colosse touches on the most vital points of Christianity, as we have already observed. They are no common or subordinate matters.

A presumptuous intrusion into things not seen,—the inflation of the carnal mind,—a total separation and abseision from Christ ;—such are the real sources of this idolatry, and such its tremendous consequences ; whatever garb of humility or of zeal in the external ordinances of religion they may assume, or even of what is accounted wisdom by the world. This is a case, then, of life and death.

18. *Intruding into those things which he hath not seen.*

1. The word rendered *intruding*, means to put our foot into the possessions or lands of another as if they were our own ; to enter with presumptuous boldness into an inheritance to which we have no right. Our territory is the revealed will of God ; whatever God has been pleased to make

known for our salvation, we may humbly enter upon with prayer for the illuminating Spirit of grace. There we may expatiate; there walk up and down "in the length and breadth of the land." But "the secret things belong unto the Lord our God:" these he "hath put in his own power." He who thrusts himself into these "secret things" of God, intrudes into that of which he knows, and can know nothing; he puts his foot in a place where he has no right. He is a trespasser at every step.

The false teachers, therefore, at Colosse, with their "enticing words," were going out of their province, and invading the inscrutable sanctity and darkness of the invisible world, by what they said concerning the mediation of angels. They might pretend humility; but it was false and voluntary, or wilful; it was not humility, but a debasement and degradation of the whole powers of the mind to human authority. They might pretend zeal in the service of religion; but it was will-worship. They might talk of wisdom; but it was a mere show of it without the reality.

On the contrary, the whole theory on which angel-worship was based, was a speculation of men thrusting themselves into the unseen world, which God had purposely concealed from them. Not only their inferences were unsound, but their premises. They "knew neither what they said, nor whereof they affirmed." A worm in the drawer of a cabinet, shut up in its tiny enclosure, as *Locke* somewhere observes, might as well pretend to guess at the construction of the universe, as mortal man venture to speculate about the orders, and employments, and powers of angels, except so far as God has distinctly revealed them.

There is space enough in the territory thrown open to us in the Bible; space enough in the prophecies of Messiah; space enough in the account of the incarnation, sufferings, resurrection, high-priesthood, and mediation of Jesus our Lord. He was "the image of the invisible God. It pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell. We are

complete in him who is the Head of all principality and power." Here is ample territory for the heirs of promise. Here we have all that we can want for knowledge, for faith, for holiness, for dutiful obedience, for meditation, for prayer, for patience, for resignation, for hope, for anticipation, for joy.

As to angels, it is enough to know that they were created by the eternal Son of God, and are sustained in life by him, and refer themselves to him as their final end. As to angels, it is enough to know that they are "ministering spirits sent forth to minister to them who shall be heirs of salvation." As to angels, it is enough to know that they were reconciled and gathered into one in Christ, and made subject to him.

To go beyond these Scripture boundaries, is to "intrude ourselves into that which we have not seen." The guesses in which the heathen sages or the Christian schoolmen indulged, without a ray of light from the Bible, was a mere presumptuous intrusion. All they feigned concerning the number and ranks of saints and angels, their beholding in the mirror of divinity what is doing upon earth, their receiving the communication of knowledge from God, their offering intercessions for men and hearing their prayers; the acceptableness of those intercessions when made; the possibility of their being present with men in all places; their acquaintance with the sincerity and desire of all men's hearts, all over the world at the same moment; and their thus filling up the intermediate gulf between the glory of Christ and the weakness of sinful men,—which are amongst the theories put forward by the schoolmen;—all this was nothing more than "old wives' fables," a most daring speculation on the supposed state of things in the invisible world, and the substitution of man's arrogant conjectures for divine revelation and divine wisdom.

Can they tell us, we may well inquire, who commanded the worship of angels at all? Can they show us any one example of such worship in the Bible? Can they prove to us that the saints even know our state and hear our prayers?

Can they tell us whether they have any power to help us? Can they inform us of the order of beings in the invisible world? And yet, to read their writings, you would suppose they knew every thing concerning angels and the capacities of dead men and women, and the blessed Virgin, and purgatory, and the benefit of the invocation of saints, as if they had been actual spectators of what they describe.* Whereas, it is a mere idle tale about things not seen; and this to the neglect of things seen and revealed. For this is to be most particularly noted, that the revelation of the Gospel is put aside when this intrusion once takes possession of the mind. Christ is dishonoured; his humbling of himself to take our nature upon him, accounted insufficient; his complete and most condescending mediation as God and man declared inadequate; the prohibition of making any likeness of any thing that is in the heaven above, or bowing down to it or serving it, daringly violated; and the actual measure of instruction given us by Almighty God as to things unseen pronounced defective. And what is acuteness of reasoning, what refinements upon refinements of speculation, what the vain distinctions between different degrees of religious worship, what the airy theories of heathen or Jewish philosophers and zealots, to reconcile these matters, when the substratum of the whole is a baseless vision, a profane imagination, nothing but arrogant obtruding guesses about the unknown world, in opposition to the realities of Christ's salvation! And the danger is the greater, because these arrogant conjectures, once entertained, seize the fancy bewilder the judgment, carry away the affections, occupy the whole soul, and corrupt every other part of religion. Man is, at all times, indeed, dull enough in discerning the value of God's revealed method of mercy, and his heart is cold and sluggish enough in submitting to it; but in inventions of its own, if once listened to, man is eager and sanguine,

* The theologians of the Sorbonne, in Paris, were accustomed to pronounce oracularly that the dead are spectators of our necessities, because in the reflex light of God, they see all things.

the affections quick and lively, and his pursuit of them enthusiastic and absorbing.

And this intrusion, interfering as it does with the glory and mediation of our Redeemer, in the case before us, soon amounts, as we have seen, to a fatal and soul-destroying heresy. It begins in intolerable pride, and ends in severing us from Christ.

And this the apostle goes on to show, *Vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind*; for there is a carnal mind, as well as carnal and fleshly lusts; there is an understanding blinded, as well as a heart depraved. "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." The fleshly, animal, earth-born man, when intruding into things not seen, not only labours ignorantly, but is soon inflated and swelled with pride and self-conceit at his supposed discoveries; the minding of the flesh, and of the spirit, are opposed in this to each other. The pretence of humility aggravates the evil; pride only swells the more securely by the cloak under which it hides itself. The mind of Christ leads men to walk humbly with their God, to acknowledge their ignorance and guilt, "not to think of themselves more highly than they ought to think, but to think soberly;" to stop where revelation stops; not to dare to intrude a single step into things unseen; but to acknowledge with humble joy the complete fulness and adequacy of Christ to all the purposes of salvation; to lie meekly and thankfully at his feet, reposing on him as the one blessed Mediator between God and man.

Christ has emptied himself, humbled himself, and stooped to take our nature upon him; that is enough; Christ says, "I am the way;" "no man cometh unto the Father but by me." I am your High Priest, "touched with the feeling of your infirmities;" that is enough. St. Paul says, "Having, therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which he hath con-

secrated for us ; let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith ;” that is enough. The mind of the Spirit, the mind of Christ, acquiesces in silence and joy.

But the mind of the flesh goes on in its own inventions ; it has overstepped the boundaries of revelation, and there, in endless space, it expatiates, full of itself, inflated by its own thoughts and reasonings, enjoying its own genius and guesses, vainly puffed up with conceit of novelty and notions of superiority over the humble disciple who sits at the feet of Jesus and hears his words, fondly clinging to a more intellectual and refined species of worship, as he terms it, and not at all perceiving that all these imaginations are the swellings of a detestable pride,—that they are carrying him away from Christ, that they dishonour and degrade him from the highest office, that of mediation founded on a previous and all-sufficient sacrifice, and overturn the whole gospel.

As the danger of the intrusion into unseen things lies peculiarly in its bewitching the fancy and heart ; so the specific result of this inflation of the carnal mind, is that it renders it incapable of being instructed and subdued again to the simplicity of the Gospel by human means. Reason, scripture, divine chastisements, the protests of faithful ministers, the warnings of past experience through all ages and under all circumstances, are of no avail. It is proof against every ordinary method of recovery. God only can break the charm ; God only can dissipate the Satanic illusion ; God only can pour the divine light, and self-knowledge, and penitence, and contrition, and humility into the soul, and extricate it from the labyrinth of a science falsely so called.

It is in the humble hope, therefore, that Almighty God will bless the means used to “ recover some from the snare of the devil, who are in danger of being taken captive by him at his will,” that “ with meekness we instruct them that oppose themselves.” It is in the humble hope, at least, that those who have only been slightly tinged with this spirit of arrogance and pride, may be awakened and rescued by a

miracle of grace ere it be too late, that we labour, "warning every man," as the apostle speaks, and teaching every man in all wisdom.

St. Paul now proceeds to mark the awful consequence of this saint-worship, as severing us from Christ.

19. *And not holding the Head, from which all the body by joints and bands having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God.*

This was the capital crime of the seducers at Colosse, that by leading men to the worship of angels they separated them from Christ. For he who trusts to other mediators than him, "holds not the head." This is the primary object of Satan; and if men are once severed from Christ, there is an end of their salvation.

And this has led the whole army of our martyrs and reformers to consider the church and bishop of Rome to be indeed "the wilful king" of Daniel, the "man of sin," and the "apostate" of St. Paul; the "harlot-church," the "false prophet," the "anti-christ" of St. John, as we have already observed; because he cuts men off from Christ the head by his invocation of saints, adoration of the Virgin, and religious honour paid to images, relics, and the host, with his other vast congeries of attendant superstition.

The image employed by St. Paul in this most awful condemnation is as simple and obvious as it is forcible and decisive.

Christ is the head of his body the church. A strict vital union subsists between him and his members. This is effected by needful joints and bands. Thus all are knit together, and the consequent increase is that of God.

1. Christ is the head of the body the church. *Not holding the head.* This is the negative denunciation, marking the great object of the entire epistle, as I have frequently noted. The apostle aims throughout it to exalt Christ as the head of his body, to illustrate his glory as the image of the

invisible God, and to place angels under him, as their Creator, Conservator, End, Reconciler, Centre of authority and Rule. He thus labours to show that we are "complete in Christ," as the only and all-sufficient Mediator between God and man; and he declares that the philosophical and Jewish inventors of the worship of angels, are governed by a voluntary and false humility; an arrogant intrusion into things not seen; and the mere inflation of a fleshly mind.

And now he pronounces the final and awful sentence, *not holding the head*. He that depends on Christ alone, that knows he is "his hope of glory," that sees in him all "the treasures of wisdom and knowledge," that discerns in him "all the fulness of the Godhead bodily," that confesses that he is "reconciled to God by the blood of his cross," that he has no other Saviour, High Priest, Intercessor, Lord, Mediator; he *holds the head*.

On the contrary, he *holds not the head* who acknowledges another lord, other mediators and advocates, whether among men or angels, another source of vital influence not flowing from Christ, another righteousness besides that which is by faith of him, other means of holiness than those which Christ has commanded, another rule of faith than his word, other sources of strength than his grace, and other ways of access to God than his mediation. Such an one *holds not the head*; he has let it go; there is an abruption; he is severed and torn from it; and all the springs of life and salvation are cut off.

2. For there is a strict vital union betwixt Christ and his members; just as in the natural body. The head in the human frame is the source of life, nourishment, support, vigour, activity, influence, to all the members. Separated from it, they die; they are dissevered; all is corruption, inactivity, insensibility, decomposition, death. There is no life, no feeling, no strength, no motion, no communion with the living. It is only by continuing in union with Christ, that health, activity, and life are maintained. The wor-

shipper, then, of saints and angels, as joint mediators and intercessors with the one only divinely appointed Mediator, lets go at once his hold on Christ; derives no longer life and influence from him; is a mortified limb; a branch dead and fruitless, cut off, as by a stroke, from the parent stock.

3. For there are needful joints by which the vital union with the head is carried on, and nourishment afforded to all the living members of Christ's mystical body. *From which all the body by joints and bands having nourishment ministered.* As the members of the human frame are joined to the head, and derive life and motion and sense from it by arteries, veins, nerves, and other means of communication; so the spiritual members of Christ are joined to him by the Holy Ghost, by faith, by exercises of continual dependence and communion, by prayer and meditation, by holy ordinances, by vital influences thus derived, by simplicity of adherence, and, above all, by making him the only means of approach to God in their religious worship. But the soul that is beguiled to apply to angel-mediation, is, by that act, disjoined and separated from Christ; the joints are dislocated; the bands torn asunder; the limbs disunited; the arteries and veins of life severed.

Nor is *nourishment* any longer *ministered*, as the apostle goes on to say. The idolatrous Christian no longer "grows up into Him in all things, who is the Head, even Christ; from whom the whole body fitly framed together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love."¹ The word *nourishment* here used, implies a copious supply of all things necessary for every particular exercise of soul connected with our pardon, access to God, acceptance, strength for obedience, final salvation.

But the joints and bands being dislocated and severed, all

1) Eph. iv. 15.

this divine, life-giving, abundant nourishment ceases to flow. Such is the effect of one false principle, angel-worship.

4. The union, also, amongst all the several parts both of the natural and mystical body is dissolved, the instant any member holds no longer by the head. For there are ligaments and bands, as well as joints, and arteries, and nerves, and veins. These bands are love. The apostle speaks of the living members of Christ being *knit together*. He had previously told them what a conflict he had for them that "their hearts might be comforted, being knit together in love, unto all the riches of the full assurance of understanding to the acknowledgment of the mystery of God, and the Father, and of Christ." Accordingly, when this mystery is no longer understood and acknowledged, and a miserable idolatry of angels, and the Virgin, and saints, and images, shares the heart of the worshipper, he is knit together by love with the spiritual Christian worshipper no more.

The bands and ties are dissevered. Union is dissolved. Divisions, sects, party-spirit, bitterness, pride, self-will, quarrels, separation, an intruding, arrogant spirit, lust of novelty, and the vain puffing up of the fleshly mind, rend the church asunder, and expose it to all the heresies and confusion which Satan, the author of division and all evil, can engender. A compulsory union under the pope, as an usurping external head of a corrupt and apostate church, may continue, but not the spiritual and tender union between the hearts of the faithful, by holy love in Christ, the living and true source of grace, life, and influence to his spiritual body.

5. The *increase of God* must be looked for no longer; that increase and growth in grace, of which God is the author, which is agreeable to his will, and tends to his glory.

There may be a morbid increase, as by the inflation of dropsy, or the disproportionate enlargement of a separate limb in the human frame. There may be an external progress as in the spread of popery or semi-popery; but this is not the increase of God; it is a morbid tumor; it is the dis-

eased swelling of worldly splendour and human traditions and superstitions, sustained by the persecuting power of secular governments. There is, also a fleshly and carnal increase of a more insidious character, from an imaginative, instrumental kind of religion, the combined effects of music, drawing, incense, architecture, history, poetry ; which the natural man, conscious of an impression from these things, mistakes for the works of the Spirit. But this is not the *increase of God*, but the mere inflation of ignorance and pride. All real, proportionate, solid, abiding, spiritual growth in grace is stopped ; and a worldly, carnal, dead profession is all that remains.

Such are the consequences of holding by angel-mediators and protectors, instead of holding by Christ the Head. The difference seems to the fleshy mind to be slight—no denial of Christ is intended—the corruption is not introduced as a corruption, but with beguiling and enticing words. The terms of Scripture are retained for a time ; distinctions are made between mediation of redemption and mediation of intercession ; idolatry is stoutly denied ; supreme religious worship is pretended to be still reserved for Christ, and “due honour” only and “veneration” are attributed to the Virgin and the saints. And doubtless some pious and awakened souls hold in substance to Christ, the Head, still, notwithstanding the errors of their church ; but the great mass of an ignorant people, from whose hands the Bible has been withdrawn, and who have been taught to rely for justification in part on their own works, place, of course, their main reliance on these idols, from the mere corruption of human nature, and hold no longer by Christ, the Head.

Can it be wondered at, then, that the bishops and clergy of the Protestant Church of England, which was brought out from these superstitions and idolatries three centuries since by the martyred founders of our Reformation, should have taken alarm at the strong leaning towards Rome (for that is all that my argument requires in these lectures) for the last

ten years or more in our Tract divines? Or can we be thankful enough to God for the condemnation, so far as it has gone, of this semi-popish party; or careful enough to watch against the remaining tendencies of it lurking in the breasts chiefly of some of our younger divines? Or can we take any other safe course to guard ourselves from the revival of such errors, than that of our apostle, that is, by a strong and decisive condemnation of them on proper occasions; by showing that they begin in a false humility, are nourished by a spirit of intrusion into the unseen world, are ripened by the ill-concealed pride of a fleshly mind, and end in severing the soul from Christ and salvation; and by going on with the apostle to exhibit in our ordinary doctrine the overwhelming glory and sufficiency of the one divine Mediator between God and man?

LECTURE XXV.

REMONSTRANCE AGAINST THE DOCTRINES AND COMMANDMENTS OF MEN.

COL. ii. 20—23.

20. *Wherefore, if ye be dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world, why, as though living in the world, are ye subject to ordinances?*

21. *Touch not; taste not; handle not;*

22. *Which all are to perish with the using, after the commandments and doctrines of men.*

23. *Which things have indeed a show of wisdom in will-worship, and humility, and neglecting of the body: not in any honour to the satisfying of the flesh.*

WE must go on now with our inspired guide, St. Paul, to the last of the three classes of corruptions at Colosse, which he had summarily noticed in verse 8, and which was the re-

sult of the two former. He had resumed, as we have seen, the consideration of the first two, and passed sentence on them, verses 11—19; he now sits in judgment on the third, verses 20—23, the mere traditions and commandments of men which never had an original authority from Almighty God; but were the dictates of heathen speculation, aided by the superstitious tendencies of Jewish converts.

In this sentence, we shall have to observe, (1.) His indignant remonstrance with those who professed to acknowledge Christ as the Lord of the new dispensation: verse 20. (2.) His contemptuous specimen of the language of the false doctors: verse 21. (3.) With two reasons of this contempt assigned: verse 22. (4.) An apparent objection to his preceding judgment answered: verse 23.

Wherefore, if ye be dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world, why, as though living in the world, are ye subject to ordinances?

1. In this indignant remonstrance, the apostle supposes the Colossians to be disciples who admitted the grand scheme of redemption as opened in its various branches in the preceding parts of his Epistle. And he asks them, Why, if they were really dead to the law, to the old covenant, the merit of works, and all the handwriting of ceremonial sacrifices, as they professed to be; and if they really believed that Christ had blotted out the deed and obligation to guilt and punishment, and nailed it to his cross, and had made a show of principalities and powers openly in his glorious triumph; why, then, did they allow a voluntary humility, and worshipping of angels to sever and cut them off as idolatrous worshippers from Christ, the Head? If, in a word, they professed to be *dead with Christ* after the example and by the virtue of his sufferings, *from the rudiments of the world*, or the feeble and introductory, and now “beggarly” elements, of a worldly and external economy; why did they, as though *still living in the world* of the old dispensation, *subject themselves* to usurping *ordinances* and impositions of men, without any divine command?

If they acknowledged that Christ had cancelled the bond, and had vanquished Satan and all his hosts ; why did they not act as persons really *dead with Christ*, both from the ceremonial law and from pagan superstitions and idolatry ? Wherefore did they conduct their worship of God by the ceremonies of Moses, and by saints and angels as joint-mediators with Christ ? Wherefore proceed as if they were not *complete in him*, and must still have recourse to the aids of an abolished, worldly sanctuary ? Why remain unsatisfied with the real, spiritual, exalted service of the Gospel ? Why submit to those who dogmatically imposed, as legal observances, human traditions, which never had a divine sanction at all ? Why permit Judaizing teachers in league with heathen philosophers to creep into the church and “beguile them of their reward,” and dogmatize amongst them ; and thus cut them off from Christ, the only and all-sufficient Mediator between God and man ?

The words, *being subject to ordinances*, mean the allowing of ordinances to be imposed on them ; the letting dogmatists inculcate a new and uncommanded system of religious austerities. This refers to those rites being instituted as necessary to salvation, as means of pardon and sanctification, and as obligatory upon the conscience ; and so interfering with the completeness of Christ’s mediation and blood.

For mere rules of decency and propriety, instituted by those who have authority in the church, and not imposed on any conscience, nor made necessary to salvation ; such as forms of public prayer and administration of the sacraments, articles of religion, the times of divine worship, the seasons of public fasts and festivals, the becoming attire of ministers, and other matters of necessary decency and order, do not pertain to what the apostle condemns. These are merely for avoiding confusion, and enabling us to “worship God without distraction ;” and may and do vary with times and circumstances in different churches.

Touch not ; taste not ; handle not.

2. The apostle, not content with this indignant remonstrance, presents us here with a specimen of the language of the false doctors, whether of Jewish or heathen origin. He gives a brief but dramatic and lively example of their manner of proceeding, and of their very words. You seem to see, as it were, the morose, austere Pharisean or Pythagorean teacher standing by the unstable Christians at Colosse, with his voluntary humility and his fleshly puffed up mind, and saying, '*Touch not* such and such food, at such and such a time, or in such a quantity—*touch it not*, however slightly and cautiously you may intend to eat of it.' '*Taste it not* even; put not this or that meat to the mouth, though you do not mean to do more, much less to eat it. Nay, *handle it not*, take it not into your hand, though without any intention of even slightly tasting or of eating it.' 'Abhor and dread the contamination. Keep at the utmost distance. It is a sin,—it is prohibited,—it is unclean,—it will defile you. If you wish to attain a higher perfection, and to follow a transcendent course of holiness, which, though not commanded of God, yet is the counsel and command of the church, *touch not, taste not, handle not*, meats and drinks, except according to the rules we lay down.

Observe the progress of superstition. First, they are forbidden to touch; then to taste; lastly, to handle. So superstition has ever crept on. It prohibits at first the lightly feeding on such and such things; when it has obtained this, then the command stretches forwards, and makes it a crime to taste even, though they refuse to eat. At length it constitutes the very handling a sacrilege. There is no end of new prohibitions being added to old ones, the moment men assume a tyranny over the souls of others. Human traditions are a labyrinth in which the conscience is more and more entangled, till at length it loses Christ and heaven.

The Pythagoreans are supposed to have been chiefly aimed at by the apostle in this place. Their philosophy was all on the side of prohibitions, abstinences, a forced celibacy,

the unlawfulness of animal food, the attaining to perfection by neglect of the body. These superstitions, as we have already observed, he is thought to have brought out of Egypt into Greece. They may possibly have been spread throughout India also.

Mr. Mede proves that the monkish abstinences condemned by St. Paul in his first Epistle to Timothy (and of which "forbidding to marry and commanding to abstain from meats" are specified as principal marks of "the departure from the faith," or apostacy of "the latter days,") were imitations of the practices brought into Greece by Pythagoras. From these, and the greater errors of the Platonists, popery took its rise in part.

The two systems addressed themselves to different classes of men; to the morose and gloomy, Pythagoras would commend himself; to the speculative and conceited, Plato. Abstinences would be the main doctrine of the one; angel-meditation of the other. Both would be aided by the converts tainted with the errors of the Pharisees and Sadducees, and other sects among the Jews. The result would be the worship of angels as to doctrine; and degrading system of austerities as to practice; and both or either would, of course, be substituted for the complete satisfaction and meditation of Christ.

But we go on.

Which are all to perish with the using, after the commandments and doctrines of men.

3. Two reasons for the remonstrance he had addressed to them, the apostle here briefly assigns. They place religion in external and perishing things which pertain not to the spiritual kingdom of God; and they proceed from human authority merely, and not divine. Thus St. Paul, in other passages. "For meat commendeth us not to God: for neither if we eat are we the better; neither if we eat not are we the worse."¹ "For the kingdom of God is not meat and

1) 1 Cor. vi. 8.

drink, but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.”² “Meats for the belly, and the belly for meats; but God shall destroy both it and them.”³ Our Lord himself also pronounced the same judgment when on earth, and assigned the reason for it. “Not that which goeth into the mouth defileth a man, for it goeth into the belly, and is cast out into the draught; but those things which proceed out of the mouth, come forth from the heart, and they defile the man;”⁴ as “evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness.”⁵

It is to this judgment of Christ himself that the apostle most probably refers. His expression, *which are all to perish with the using*, seems an abridgment of our Lord’s longer discourse. There is a just contempt in the apostle’s language. These ordinances to which they were subjecting themselves, were all petty, miserable, perishing things, and not pertaining to the real spiritual design of Christ’s salvation.

St. Paul adds, *after the commandments and doctrines of men*; referring most probably to another part of the same discourse of our Lord: “Well hath Esaias prophesied of you, hypocrites, as it is written, This people honoureth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me. Howbeit in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.” “Full well ye reject the commandment of God, that ye may keep your own traditions.”⁶

The apostle enters into no further refutation. It is enough that these impositions are perishing in themselves, and merely resting on human authority. Whatever is thus perishing, and thus of man’s invention, is of no real value in itself; and does an injury to Christ; makes void his death; and reduces men to a servitude from which his grace and mediation were designed to deliver us.

2) Rom. xiv. 17.

3) 1 Cor. iv. 13.

4) Matt. xv. 11, 17, 20.

5) Mark vii. 15—23.

6) Mark viii. 3—9.

And yet the whole fabric of duties and practices in the Church of Rome is made up of little else than minute and petty observances of meats and drinks which perish with the using, and never touch the grandeur of the Gospel; and of human traditions which add to it, and which overwhelm, pervert, and are ultimately substituted in the place of the mediation of the Son of God. So wide-spread and fatal is the effect of letting go our hold of Christ and his glorious headship, and taking up with saints and angels. It ends in idolatry in the worship; and in miserable, perishing usages and mere human devices, in the practices connected with that worship. All is harmonious in the Gospel. Let Christ be "all and in all," and the conscience is at peace, and the few regulations in each church for order and decency are simple and easy; whilst the main stress of all effort is directed to solid faith, holy love, scriptural comfort, and universal obedience to God's commands.

In false worship, also, all is proportionate to the first erroneous principle. Angel-mediation cuts off from Christ, nourishes further measures of the presumption and pride from which it springs, brings men back to a servile worldly religion, and ends in contemptible observances of mean, perishing matters, resting on mere human authority, and conducting nothing to man's sanctification.

Which things have indeed a shew of wisdom in will-worship, and humility, and neglecting of the body; not in any honour to the satisfying of the flesh.

Here the apostle meets an objection and detects the false colours with which the worship of angels, and a system of scrupulous abstinences, were decked out. The Romanist can allege nothing for his unscriptural invocation of saints and angels, his purgatory, indulgences, prayers for the dead, celibacy, and superstitious abstinences, but what is struck down as by a thunderbolt by this verse.

They have a show and pretence, indeed, of wisdom to the natural man who understands not the mystery of the Gospel,

the glory of Christ, and that "we are complete in him." They have an air of wisdom to those who forget the infinite folly and guilt of departing a single step from God's revealed will. They have a show of wisdom to those who can trample on the unspeakable majesty of the one living and true God, and his unutterable hatred of all idolatry.

No doubt, putting all these great matters of revelation aside, and judging by the admiration men have for their own inventions in religion, for their own notions of worship, their own ideas of humility, and of not sparing the body, these things have a show of wisdom, but not the reality, nor the truth of it; nothing of "the wisdom which is from above;" nothing of "the wisdom and spiritual understanding," which the apostle has commended in an earlier part of his Epistle; nothing of "the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God appointed before the world for our" (attaining eternal) "glory in Christ Jesus." No; this *shew of wisdom* is "foolishness with God." "If any man seem to be wise in this world," (this worldly way,) "let him become a fool" (in the esteem of false teachers) "that he may be" (truly) "wise."

Three pretences to wisdom are here exposed: will-worship, humility, neglecting the body—the very points in which the Romanist, and those who follow him, boast themselves. Will-worship charms fallen nature; the follies and impositions it invents are pleasant in comparison with the holy, humble, adoring worship of God through the blood of the one Mediator. A voluntary and wilful humility also gratifies the corrupt human heart as a substitute for real prostration and abasement of soul before God under a sense of guilt, and a simple faith in the inspired word revealing the salvation of Christ. An uncommanded and excessive neglect of the body likewise attracts the admiration of the natural man as a proof of extraordinary self-denial; and the three make up a splendid show of wisdom in religious worship in the estimate of an ignorant and superstitious multitude. The apostle re-

futes them all by a single word—they have the “show,” and only the show, of wisdom.

1. The false teachers say that he who only does what God positively commands, does nothing but what is common; but that he who goes beyond, and worships God by certain counsels of the church, and by voluntary methods to which he is not bound, becomes an eminent saint among men, lays up works of supererrogation, and makes God, as it were, his debtor. Here, then, will-worship comes in.

This may consist in either choosing creatures, angels, saints, the Virgin, images, relics, as objects of prayer and reliance; or in worshipping the true God, but not in that manner nor by those acts which he hath enjoined; but by others framed of man's own inventions.

A worship may and will be voluntary, and so a will-worship, in a good sense, when we perform it from love to God, and “in the spirit of adoption, crying, Abba, Father.” The apostle accordingly teaches us that “if there be first a willing mind, it is accepted;” and that God “works in us to will and to do of his good pleasure.” “Thy people,” saith the Lord, to Messiah, “shall be willing in the day of thy power.”

But wilful modes of worship chosen by the reasonings of philosophizing, Judaizing doctors, addressed, not to Christ, but to creatures and man-invented mediators, or conducted in ways which God has not commanded, are the most odious and provoking of all abominations.

Yet this will-worship has a show of wisdom to us blind creatures. Men are averse to what God reveals for our salvation, and commands for our rule of life; from the obligation of which they hope to escape by means of human inventions. There is nothing to which they submit themselves with so much reluctance as the simple way of God's mercy, by the merits and mediation of Christ; and the purity of the divine commandments. So that any modes of worship are preferred. They look on them as a sort of satisfaction, ran-

som, meritorious service, which will compensate for a bad heart, earthly affections, lusts indulged, carelessness, vanity, an irreligious godless life.

2. The second colour of wisdom is an appearance of humility, a voluntary, wilful humility, as the basis of a wilful and uncommanded worship of angels. For the love of fame or splendour is strong in men; and therefore the renunciation of all worldly things seems to show wisdom. The profession of the entire poverty which the monks make; their seclusion from the world; their celibacy; their prohibition of certain foods; their perpetual repetition of prayers to saints and angels; their habits, dress, vows; their implicit faith in the traditions of the church; their servile obedience to their ecclesiastical superiors; their bowing their necks to the earth that the pope may go over; all has a show of humility in the eye of an ignorant people. Whereas it is in truth a refined and deadly species of pride and self-righteousness. It is a degradation of the soul to man before his fellow-men. It is a renunciation of our individual accountable being. It is a transfer of our individual conscience to another's keeping. It is a prostration of our own judgment and duty under the feet of the priest, who has no claim to the offering. It is the farthest possible from the filial humiliation of heart before Almighty God in his revelation of mercy in Christ Jesus that can be imagined. Ignatius Loyola advises, in the Epistle which is read at table every month in the college of the Jesuits, "That they should perform simply with a blind obedience what the superior enjoins; not considering what is enjoined as good or useful; since every such thought takes away from the merit and importance of obedience."* This is a wilful humility indeed.

3. The third colour of wisdom is *the neglecting of the body*, the not sparing it, the treating it with a severity and cruelty which God had not commanded; whilst they omitted

* Dav. in loc.

and opposed that due honour and care for satisfying properly the wants of its infirm mortal nature, which God had permitted, and indeed enjoined. For as most men love to live luxuriously and at ease, a neglect of all this indulgence strikes the blind superstitious mass of men with admiration, and the greater length to which it is carried seems to those who are ignorant of the pride from which it all springs, and the true method of sanctification by Christ's grace and power, a wise course. Then come in macerations, sackcloth, lying upon the ground, scourgings, bare feet, pilgrimages, long-continued fastings, squalor, and endless self-imposed tasks.

Thus they err as to the very principle of Christian mortification, which is not the afflicting of the body, but the subduing of the spirit; and also as to the mode of it, which must be regulated by Holy Scripture, and not by human traditions.

Fastings, and watchings, and self-denial, are indeed most praiseworthy, if they are connected with knowledge and scriptural moderation (as St. Paul "kept under his body and brought it into subjection"); if they are designed to testify externally a real heartfelt penitence; if they aid us in more ardently calling upon God.

But if we observe them in order to supersede the merits of Christ; if we think they are so many satisfactions to God's justice; if they are connected with the intercession of saints and angels; if they are imposed upon the conscience, and carried to an unnatural length, then, whatever show of wisdom they may present, they are contrary to the commands of God and the grace of Christ; nor are they in any *honour* to that due *satisfying of our mortal flesh*, which may render the body an efficient servant to the soul in the worship of Christ.

For the phrase, *not in any honour to the satisfying of the flesh*, has this sense. Though at first obscure, it will be easily understood if we attend to the apostle's argument. It stands

opposed to *the neglecting of the body*, which the apostle is reprehending: *the honour*, therefore, means care, provision. So we read, in nearly the same sense, "Honour widows who are widows indeed."⁷ "Honour thy father and thy mother."⁸ "Let the elders who rule well be counted worthy of double honour"⁹—probably meaning maintenance. "Whosoever shall say to his father or his mother, It is a gift by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me, and honour not his father or his mother, he shall be free"¹⁰—probably also meaning, honour not with support.

The word *satisfying*, again, stands opposed to the inanition and total sinking for want of necessary nourishment which the false teachers imposed.

The word *flesh*, therefore, is also not used in the sense of the corruption of our nature, but simply for our mortal, fleshly frame, our body. The terms thus explained leave all clear.

St. Paul condemns, then, that *neglect of the body* which prevents the due *honour* and care for moderately *satisfying* the cravings of hunger, and other wants, for which God has commanded us to provide, and which he has in his good providence implanted in our frame for the wisest purposes, and the supply of which shuts out a variety of temptations to distrust of God and to attempts at uncommanded methods of obtaining needful food; as we see in our Saviour's temptation in the wilderness.

What a view does this whole argument of our apostle present of the consequences of the corruptions which were beginning to bud forth at Colosse, and of which the idolatry of angels was the principal one.

Taking occasion from the Jewish abrogated law of ceremonies, we see how it plunged headlong into Platonizing and Pythagorizing speculations, and impositions of angel-invocation and endless austerities. We see the principles from which it all sprang laid open by the apostle to the very quick

7) 1 Tim. iii. 3.

8) Exod. xx. 12.

9) 1 Tim. v. 17.

10) Matt. xv. 5, 6.

in will-worship, a false humility and an unlawful neglect of the body. We perceive how the mediation of Christ was thus overturned by the idolatry, and the merits and grace of Christ by the perishing, miserable observances founded on the traditions of men; and we see how the only plea for these austerities, “a show of wisdom,” is indignantly refuted by the apostle as being a perversion of every principle on which it was based—the filial worship of God, genuine humility, and the proper honour and care of our mortal bodies.

Such is the system of the “man of sin.” Such the dangers which we have been tempted to incur in our own church from a leaning to that apostacy. It is in the strong light of our apostle’s argument that the magnitude and reality of the evil is distinctly to be discerned. They who see the error only in its developments, in some of its branches and effects, may consider it rather as a folly, a novelty, or a weakness, than a fundamental departure from Christ. But those who follow our apostle will see in it a terrible denial of the very life of gospel doctrine. It is, therefore, that the least innovation on the doctrines, language, discipline, or usages of our reformed church is in this state of things so alarming. All is at stake; a tendency towards Rome is at the bottom of such changes; her main corruptions are defended and palliated. And we may judge of the ultimate length to which all would speedily come, by the state of the Church of Rome before our eyes for twelve centuries.

But we hope for better things; the delusion, we trust, is passing away; and the glory of Christ’s sole sacrifice and mediation, obscured for a time, will shine forth more brightly, as we hope, than ever; and men will stand aghast a few years hence at the almost incredible prevalence of such tendencies and opinions amongst any of a body of clergy who had in common subscribed the Articles of our church, by which these superstitions were so unmistakably condemned.

LECTURE XXVI.

THE GOSPEL METHOD OF SANCTIFICATION.

COL. iii. 1—4.

1. *If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God.*
2. *Set your affections on things above, not on things on the earth.*
3. *For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God.*
4. *When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory.*

THERE is scarcely any contrast in the Bible more remarkable than between the close of the second chapter of this Epistle, and the beginning of the third. In the second, all was darkness, false principles, Mosaic ceremonies, merit of works, worship of angels, human philosophy, affected humility, arrogant intrusion, vain conceit, pretended wisdom, a depriving of the mortal body of its indispensable and appointed nourishment; accompanied with the apostle's condemnation of the three classes of corruptions at Colosse into which these evils had divided themselves.

But in the beginning of our present chapter, a blaze of light breaks forth; we have a rising with Christ, the right hand of God, a heavenly taste, affections attracted to things above, the Christian dead to the world and a worldly religion, his life hid in God, a hope of appearing with Christ at the second advent in his glory.

Here is the true Gospel; here are "the grace and truth which came by Jesus Christ;" here are light, joy, a filial spirit, love, gratitude, a holy disposition of heart; all the principles by which the blessed Spirit begins and carries on sanctification in the soul.

For the subject of these verses, as we have already intimated, is the true method of our sanctification as enjoined in

the Gospel, in contrast with saint-invocation and its attendant abstinences and superstitions. For our apostle opposes our rising with Christ to those false methods and vain exercises of devotion. He opposes the body of holiness to the shadow, the solid doctrine of the Lord Jesus, to the puerile lessons of superstition ; the fulness and completeness of Christ as Mediator, to the mediation of angels ; the “increase with the increase of God,” to inflated conceit ; in a word, heaven to earth, Christ’s religion to man’s.

Nothing in Scripture so dark as those thickening clouds which hang over and obscure the Gospel ; nothing so bright, so holy, so exalted as Christ shining out without a cloud as “the Sun of righteousness.”

This is the only scriptural method of meeting fundamental errors as to the mediation of Christ, or any other corruptions of the Gospel. We must prepare for their rejection, as the apostle doth, by the exposition of the full glory of the Gospel in the particular points threatened. This exposition must be mixed with overflowing tenderness, love, sympathy, prayers. Having done this, we must give solid reasons for rejecting the errors themselves. Lastly, we must go on, with St. Paul, and show the true method of the Holy Ghost in carrying on man’s sanctification and salvation.

If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things that are above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God.

The real secret of God’s method of sanctification lies in the acting upon our resurrection with Christ which we profess. We must imbibe fully all the blessings centering in his person and works ; we must follow Christ in heart and mind, in meditation and communion, in ways of worship and prayer, to that right hand of God, where he sitteth in power and glory, as our complete and perfect Redeemer, Intercessor, Mediator, Forerunner, Head, till he shall “come again to receive us to himself.”

In all this, St. Paul proceeds on what he had stated as to our resurrection with Christ by the faith of the operation of

God. This superseded circumcision, the Mosaic ceremonies, meats and drinks, &c., and opened a wide and free access through Christ only to all the blessings of the Gospel. This rendered circumcision a beggarly element, branded as impious and abominable all worship of saints and angels; and made abstinences and traditions contemptible. For we are actually *risen with Christ* from the grave and death of sin, "through the faith of the operation of God who had raised him from the dead;" and this blessing rested on a full provision for "the forgiveness of trespasses" in the blood of Christ; on the "blotting out of the legal handwriting which was against us," and on "the triumph over principalities and powers" accomplished by Christ alone upon the cross.

This, then, is the beginning of real, vital, effective Christianity, a rising with Christ from the tomb; a quickening of the soul dead in trespasses and sins; a life of spiritual feeling, knowledge, faith, love; an actual "translation from the power of darkness into the kingdom of God's dear Son."

Let the Colossians remember this, and simply carry it out daily, and all would be well; they would "hold the Head;" they would "walk in Christ, rooted and built up and established in the faith, as they had been taught."

The expression, *If ye then be risen with Christ*, is a supposition, and throws us back upon the apostle's whole previous doctrine. *If ye be risen with Christ*; if "the Gospel has come to you," and you have "known the grace of God in truth;" if you are being "filled with the knowledge of God's will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding;" if you believe in Christ "as the image of the invisible God," the Creator of angels and archangels, and all the invisible world. If you know that he is the "Head of his body the church;" that "in all things he has the pre-eminence; that he made peace by the blood of his cross;" that he is "our hope of glory;" that in him "dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily;" and that, in a word, "we are complete in him;" if you believe all this, then, instead of being "be-

guiled with enticing words" as to any other mediator, or any other means of sanctification; instead of being made a prey of by "a false philosophy;" instead of letting go your hold of Christ, in order to reach after angels, as mediators; instead of following after matters of perishable and miserable insignificancy, show your real resurrection with Christ by seeking him, where he is only to be found, at the right hand of God.

Thus all the Epistle hangs together; there is a golden chain connecting every part. And though, if the links be examined severally, they are found to be firm and strong; yet, if viewed together, they are of immeasurably greater force.

Sanctification springs from union of heart with Christ as our only Mediator; from our imbibing and drinking in more and more of his grace and blessing, as set before us in the Gospel; from a heart-affecting meditation of *the things that are above*.

We should then have no time, no taste, no will, no room in our hearts to trifle with the inventions of men. We should ascend into heaven far out of the reach of these rudiments of the world; we should be drawn up towards Christ with a powerful attraction; be strangers upon earth; and no longer seek a "worldly sanctuary;" but have our "conversation" and citizenship "in heaven."

All our philosophy would then be to disengage our hearts from the earth; to raise them up to Christ; and there to bind ourselves to his mediatorial throne at the right hand of God.

But what did the false doctors aim at? They wished to detain them in "beggarly elements." They wished to occupy their attention with perishing trifles. They wished to subject them to a "voluntary humility and worshipping of angels."

But what Christ commends to us is far more sublime and exalted than the low, earthly schemes of men; and this makes us follow him with more alacrity of mind. Ceremo-

nies and will-worship appear more contemptible than ever: they vanish into thin air. The mediation of angels is blasphemous; it obscures the office of Christ, and robs him of his glory.

Here it is important to remark, that if the intercession of angels, or our prayers to them, in any the lowest sense, had been a part of the divine method of sanctification, this, or some part of the latter division of the last chapter, would have probably been the place to have met with the directions and limitations for guarding such a worship; whereas not a word is said about them. We are to rise, not with angels, but with Christ our Lord. We are to ascend, not to angels as mediators, but to our risen Saviour. We find at the right hand of God, not angels, but Christ only. There he reigns, and must reign, with undivided glory, "till all his enemies are put under his feet."

Look up, Christians! his distance of place makes no separation; he watches us; he is "present where two or three are met together in his name;" he embraces us with his powerful mediation; he intercedes for us; he carries on our cause as our advocate at the right hand of God above, whilst his Spirit is our advocate and intercessor to carry on Christ's cause in our hearts here below.¹

Set your affections on things above, not on things on earth.

We seek what we love; our efforts follow our affections, whether we know it or not.

Set your affections, saith our apostle, *on things above*, that is, on a religion, heavenly, unaffected, simple, free from the entanglements of a worldly dispensation. Shun all the low and earthly ceremonies and inventions of the "disputers of this world." Affect, mind, delight in Christ, heaven, grace, truth, the soul, the God and Father of all, Providence; the Holy Spirit, communion with Christ, the "many mansions," and "the mount Sion, the heavenly Jerusalem, the general assembly and church of the first-born, the spirits of just men

1) Rom. viii. 26, 27.

made perfect, Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, the blood of sprinkling, speaking better things than that of Abel.”²

Affect and love the word of Christ, the Bible ; and the promise of Christ, the worship of Christ, the praises of Christ, the sacraments of Christ, the anticipations of being with Christ in body and soul for ever, therein revealed.

Affect and love what is spiritual, intellectual, moral, elevated, permanent, purifying, consoling, strengthening, eternal, according to the rule of Holy Scripture.

To *set our affections on things above*, is more than the seeking them, though necessary to it. It is choosing, it is loving, it is placing our happiness and delight in them, and the means of attaining to them. It is the direct effect of the birth and renewal of the Holy Spirit. As the iron, touched by the magnet, turns to the pole, so the mind, touched by grace, turns to Christ.

The apostle adds, *not on things on earth*, in order to enforce the exhortation. Mark the steps. *Seek those things which are above*—that was intelligible enough ; but it does not satisfy the apostle. He repeats the same exhortation slightly varied, *set your affections on things above*. Still he is not content till he has added the negation—*not on things on the earth*.

For things of earth too naturally draw us down, attract us, fix us. Esau’s red pottage prevails over the birthright. The guests in the parable turn away to their lands, or oxen, or families. The Gadarene mind wishes Christ to depart from their coasts.

These *things on earth* have a special reference, no doubt, to the grand argument of the apostle, his condemnation of low angel-worship, miserable earthly forms and traditions, the trifles, toys, tinsel, which tie us down to an earthly religion, and make us creep on the ground.

Christ, on the contrary, calls us up to himself, bids us

² Heb. xii. 22—24.

set our affections on heavenly things, and renounce an earthly worship and creature-intercession.

But the expression, also, takes a wider range ; not indeed so wide as to comprehend the vicious passions and appetites which we are afterwards commanded to “mortify as our members which are upon the earth ;” but wide enough to include every thing not in itself sinful, as riches, lands, houses, property, equipages, fame, estates, titles, gold, silver, honour, pleasure, power ; all the sensible and external world, to which, from our fallen nature, we are so propense.

These are apt to cling to us, to entangle the affections, to occupy the thoughts, to engage too much time and anxiety. We must, therefore, resolutely “set our affections on things above, and not on things on the earth.”

For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God.

The apostle still persists in his main argument. If you are, indeed, *risen with Christ*, and are truly *setting your affections on the things which are above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God* ; then what is our true state, properly speaking, during our mortal pilgrimage ? *We are dead*. Man lives where he loves. As “she that liveth in pleasure is dead while she liveth ;”³ so he who is dead to pleasure and the world, lives to Christ and heavenly things, whilst he is dead.

This death is the privation of the pernicious and condemned life of an abrogated ceremonial dispensation, the dreams of philosophers, and uncommanded austerities. It is the privation also of “the life of the old man,” the abolition of its principles, and the annihilation of the habits on which it depends. We are dead, because we are crucified with Christ ; we are are dead, also, because we have “put off the old man with his deeds ;” have “put off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ.”

Christians may properly be said to be thus dead, notwith-

3) 1 Tim. v. 6.

standing the remains of indwelling sin. For the complete death of the old man is designed and begun, and will be ere long fully accomplished. So a condemned criminal is a dead man, though the execution be a little delayed.

This death involves a total cessation of the former hopes, interests, motives, and pursuits of the worldly and carnal mind. All the mainsprings of activity are changed. A new kind of life, "even the faith of the Son of God;"⁴ new objects of affection, even *the things that are above*; a new scope and aim, *even Christ at the right hand* of the Majesty on high, have succeeded to his former feelings and habits.

This death, therefore, includes, of course, an entire renunciation of Moses, and circumcision, and philosophy, and angel-worship, and intrusion into the unseen world, and the vanity of the fleshly mind, and traditions, and human commandments.

Your life is hid with Christ in God, proceeds our apostle; for we have a life notwithstanding death. We are dead to the law and to the old man, but alive to Christ, and to the new man. We are dead to Moses, and Plato, and Pythagoras; but alive to Christ, to him that raised us from the grave of sin. We have that life which Christ gives when he receives us into his body, and makes us his members. We hold by him as our head; and "having nourishment ministered by joints and bands, we increase with the increase of God."

This life is a hidden one; the world sees it not, but accounts it folly; persecutions and afflictions increase this concealment. It is not a life shown, and displayed, and subject to, and courting the observation of mankind, but hidden. It is sometimes hidden from the Christian himself, to his own feelings and perceptions, when oppressed with temptation and under heavy chastisements.

But it is *hid with Christ in God*. Christ himself was hidden when upon earth, and is hidden now to the carnal mind;

4) Gal. ii. 20.

and the Christian's life is hidden with him. This is to be well noted, lest we should murmur or tremble when our life here on earth seems to differ nothing from death, under the ignominy of the cross, and the variety of afflictions and troubles we meet with. For this hidden life is still out of danger, though it does not appear to be so. For both God is faithful, and will not deny the deposit, nor fail in the custody he has undertaken; and our union with Christ, as our surety and Mediator, makes it yet more secure.

For what more can be desired than that our life should remain in the hands of the very fountain of life? When, therefore, we look around on all sides, and nowhere discern life or a way to escape from our troubles, still "we are saved by hope." The springs of this life abide. The streams of the living water flow still into the soul by the influences of the Holy Ghost. "We are crucified with Christ, nevertheless, we live, yet not we, but Christ liveth in us."⁵

Thus, as a treasure under ground, our life is a hidden, subterraneous one. Or as a river running concealed for a time in a hidden channel, our life flows beneath and out of sight. A worldly religion, and the vanities of traditions, and all human philosophical dreams about angels, touch it not; it is *hid with Christ in God*.

The expression is remarkable. Indeed, as the preceding chapter is nearly the most gloomy of any in the New Testament; so these verses are, as we have already observed, the most cheering and exalted.

The Christian is hidden from common observation, as the angel-messengers were of old, when sent to "minister to the heirs of salvation;" he passes through the vanity-fair of life unnoticed and unknown; he has other views, supports, objects, consolations, than ordinary mortals. He has no dependence on creature-intercessors, human or angelic. *His life is hid with Christ in God*.

When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall we

5) Gal. ii. 20.

also appear with him in glory. For our life will not always be hidden. When Christ appears to raise the dead and judge the world, then shall we appear with him and share his glory; then shall we be made completely like him, both in body and soul; then be manifested and displayed and made known. For “from heaven we look for the Saviour;”—“who shall descend with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and the trump of God.” Then shall we be “caught up together in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so shall we ever be with the Lord;”—“our vile body being fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able to subdue all things unto himself.”⁶

Thus will Christ “come and receive us unto himself, that where he is, there we may be also.”⁷ The conflict of the church and the world is our probation. When this is past, then shall we be manifested and made eternally happy and glorious.

If we want to be manifested sooner, we shall be disappointed. No; our *life is hid with Christ in God; and when Christ, who is our life, our joy, our hope, our all; Christ our Redeemer, Saviour, Mediator, Master, Lord; Christ our whole and entire life and portion, (not angels, not forms, not traditions,) when he shall appear, then, and not before, shall we also appear with him in glory.*

If our life, then, be thus included and hidden in Christ, let us be content with its lying hid till this appointed time. Let us not be so irresolute as to refuse to bear up until that day. The glory of the head will be the glory of the members. We have now the root, the beginnings, the first fruits of this life. Christ is the breath of our nostrils, the cause, the author of life, on whom ours entirely depends. As he once appeared upon earth in mortal flesh, so he will appear the second time in glory, in light, in perfection, with all his holy angels as his attendants to swell his train. Then will

6) Phil. iii. 20, 21; 1 Thess. iv. 16, 17.

7) John xiv. 3.

be bring us to the perfect knowledge, love, peace, and joy, to the immortality of body and soul, the holiness, beauty, splendour, freedom from suffering, and capacity for endless felicity, which will consummate our happiness for ever and ever.

“Here, then, is the contrast between man’s inventions and additions to religion, and the simplicity of Christ. Here the false methods of obtaining pardon and holiness, and the true. Here the external fictitious show of man’s wisdom, and the divine and effective wisdom of God. Here the idolatrous worship of saints and angels, as joint mediators with Christ, and the pure, unmixed adoration of the one all-glorious Mediator Jesus Christ, “in whom we are complete.”

Let us here pause, then, and glance for a moment at the prodigious and almost incredible impiety of the Church of Rome, as expanded from the few false principles and acts which our apostle so vehemently condemned, in their first buddings, at Colosse.

For a paganized Christianity has been built up by the Pope. Of this whole fabric, idolatry is the foundation; demonolatry superseding the worship of Christ as Mediator; the Virgin Mary put in the place of the Son of God.

As a consequence of this saint-worship, prayers for the dead, purgatory, indulgences, satisfaction, masses for the souls of the departed, veneration of relics, adoration of the host, the worship of images, religious visits to the tombs of martyrs gradually sprung up.

Pilgrimages to celebrated churches of the Virgin, miracles wrought by her intercession, chapels dedicated to her honour, oblations made to her, and litanies, composed with endless names of blasphemy, followed.

With this system of idolatry, like its pagan predecessor, the power of a grasping priesthood, exactions for every spiritual service, benefactions and gifts for masses, donations of land to churches and monasteries, commutations of sins for money, absolutions purchased at a given price were gradu-

ally interwoven; and human vices thus put under the protection of an infallible church.

Of course, to effect all this, the Bible must be withdrawn from the hands of the people; and, when read even with a license, its interpretations be governed by the fathers, tradition, and the pope. Thus the deeds of our heavenly inheritance being put aside, there was no obstacle to the demonolatrious forgeries of the priesthood. Prayers in an unknown tongue, the *opus operatum* of the sacraments, implicit faith, that is, a faith receiving blindfold all that the apostate church teaches, the perpetual miracle of transubstantiation, and the sacrifice of the mass for the quick and the dead soon followed.

Justification before the tribunal of God, by the alone merits of our Lord Jesus Christ, had been early disclaimed, and an inherent operation of grace substituted; that is, man's deserts put in the place of the sacrifice of Christ. The merit of congruity and condignity was a corollary from this. The addition of five sacraments to the two instituted by the Lord, the denial of the cup to the laity, auricular confession to the priest, monastic vows, the merit of virginity, and the celibacy of the clergy were dovetailed into this system of human works and deservings.

In the mean time, the authority of the priesthood, and of the bishops and priests, were, by degrees, subjected to the pope. The temporal dignity of the ten Roman kingdoms bowed to the ecclesiastical. They gave their power to the mystic wild beast, as St. John had predicted. There he sat, and sits now, enthroned in the chair of blasphemy, styling himself the vicar of Christ, dispensing with the laws of God, imposing on the consciences of men whatever idolatries and superstitions he pleased; and proclaiming himself the Antichrist by "opposing and exalting himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped."

To terrify men into obedience, at least an external obedience, the secular arm was called in, persecution cruelly

inflicted, the horrors of the inquisition invented, the blasphemous claim to infallibility assumed, a temporal dominion over the country round Rome obtained, and the mighty defences of an earthly sovereignty thrown around his spiritual idolatry.

What more? Councils and synods through a series of dark and ignorant ages from the first council of Nice to those of the fifth Lateran and of Trent, that is, for more than twelve centuries, gradually sinking deeper and deeper in superstition, strengthened the papal usurpations; the second Nicene in 787 establishing the worship of images, the fourth Lateran in 1215 decreeing the extermination of heretics, and the synod of Trent in 1545 embodying and confirming the whole accumulated mass of abominations.

To deck out all this idolatry and superstition with what attracts the multitude when ignorant of Scripture, shows, pageants, music, incense, processions, gorgeous robes, endless variety of altars, chapels to saints, statues, images, meretricious splendour of churches were multiplied. Gold and jewels dazzled the eyes, melodious sounds of music fell upon the ear, fragrant perfumes overpowered the senses.

But the Reformation burst out in the sixteenth century. To meet the shock of it, the Jesuits arose in 1534. They surrounded the papacy as a body-guard. They devoted themselves to its defence by a special vow. They craftily adapted their measures to the necessity imposed by the revival of learning and the invention of printing. They seized the spiritual guidance of princes. They grasped at popular education. They worked their wily way by talent, learning, scholastic refinements, the Aristotelian philosophy, a yielding system of morals, art, chicane, policy, intrigue. And after a dissolution of their order of forty years they contrived to obtain a re-establishment soon after the peace of 1814; and are now filling our colonies, our Indian Empire, and our mission stations abroad, and every part of the Brit-

ish dominions at home, fed by the Propaganda societies in papal Europe.

Such is popery as worked out from the few principles condemned by our apostle at Colosse; and such is the system to which, with unutterable fatuity, our Tractarian divines have been so lamentably tending.

And how has the apostacy gained its hold on the consciences and affections of men? Simply by "beguiling" them, as St. Paul tells us, "with enticing words," by making a prey of them by philosophy and vain deceit," by building upon a "voluntary humility" well worked into their habits in childhood, by a "show of wisdom" attractive to the superstitious mind, by an affected "neglect of the body," and a "will-worship" dictated by the church.

In this artful way, Rome has much to say for herself. She asserts that she is misrepresented by the Protestants. She acknowledges Christ as the only Redeemer; she holds the doctrine of the Holy Trinity, the Incarnation, the Atonement, the work of the Holy Ghost. She retains the three ancient creeds. She boasts of having overcome in the early centuries all the blasphemous heresies which denied the humanity or divinity of Christ, or the fall and corruption of man, or the personality and grace of the Holy Ghost. She resisted the Gnostic, Manichæan, Arian, Pelagian, Macedonian, Apollinarian, Eutychian, and Nestorian heresies. She extinguished the Waldenses and Albigenses, defended the massacre of St. Bartholemew, and the revocation of the edict of Nantes. She is the orthodox church. She claims antiquity, universality, and general consent. She points to her fathers and saints, to her sisters of charity and her monastic institutions, to her learned Benedictines and Sorbonne divines. She bids you contemplate the piety, humility, and spirituality of her Thomas à Kempis. She tells you that with her alone are the feelings of awe, veneration, and deep devotion to be found. She bids you, in a word,

contrast her unity with the varieties and divisions of the reformed bodies.

But, brethren, you will never listen to these enticing words with the New Testament in your hands. You will pierce this whited sepulchre, and look within, and see the dead men's bones and all uncleanness. Instead of words and pretences you will ask for facts. You will contrast St. Paul's method of sanctification with that of the pope. You will tell them that the three creeds are nullified by the thirteen suffrages of Pope Pius IV. You will tell them that the heresies they crushed, and the fathers they rely on, were chiefly before the ripening of the apostacy at the commencement of the seventh century. You will remind them that their persecution of the Waldenses and Albigenses, and their concurrence in the murders of Paris, and the banishment of the flower of the population from France, were amongst their foulest crimes. As to antiquity, tell her it is clearly against her. The universal consent claimed is all contradictory ; and the general diffusion asserted, a lie. You will inform her that her Thomas à Kempis, and Pascal, and Nicole, in later ages, and her Cyprian and Augustine in earlier ones, were rescued by God's mercy from the idolatry and real spirit of Rome prevalent in their day, and protested against it. As to her feelings of awe and veneration, and her unity, you will let her know we possess them all in our own Protestant churches, without pushing them to superstition, and without swamping them in the mass of idolatry which destroys all their real effect in the church of the apostacy.

Rome, in a word, is not misrepresented by the Protestants. She is perfectly understood ; as she was by St. Paul and the other inspired writers who have delineated her features to the very life. Her system is idolatrous ; her worship frivolous and debasing ; her discipline a tyranny ; her doctrines in the very teeth of Christ's mediation ; her exter-

nal government an usurpation; and her false humility and show of wisdom only a cloak for pride and folly.

But St. Paul has settled all these points in the verses we have been considering; and will aid us in those we have yet to consider in learning further the gospel method of sanctification.

LECTURE XXVII.

MEANS OF CHRISTIAN SANCTIFICATION—MORTIFICATION AND RENUNCIATION OF SIN.

Col. iii. 5—9.

5. *Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry:*

6. *For which things' sake the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience:*

7. *In the which ye also walked sometime, when ye lived in them.*

8. *But now ye also put off all these; anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth.*

9. *Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds.*

WE have concluded our remarks on the apostle's decisive and most weighty judgment on angel-worship, v. 18 and 19, including his condemnation of the Jewish notions, by means of which it was insinuated, v. 11—17; and the austerities to which it led, v. 20—23. We have considered, also, his contrasted and most striking view of the real method of our sanctification: chap. iii. v. 1—4.

St. Paul proceeds now, in the twelve verses, of which the first five are to be the subject of this lecture, to urge on the Colossians the various means which are necessary to this "rising with Christ," and by which it must be progressively

carried on. These are, the mortification of the corruptions and vices which directly oppose the spiritual life : v. 5—9. The putting on all the graces and duties which become such a life, v. 13—15. And a diligent study of the word of Christ, the Holy Scriptures, as the divine rule of the faith and practice in which that life consists, v. 16 and 17.

Mortify, therefore, your members which are upon the earth. For how can they who “are dead, and whose life is hid with Christ in God,” who are “risen with him,” and dwelling in heart and affection continually in heaven, and who are humbly hoping to be manifested “with Christ in glory ;” how can they live in those sins which are hateful to God, and thus deny and defeat all the holy ends of his Gospel ?

In order, therefore, that we may prove the sincerity of our professed resurrection with Christ to a heavenly life, and that we may be capable of rising more and more in him and by him, St. Paul exhorts us to mortify ourselves, not after the human inventions and austerities of Jewish or heathen doctors, but by putting to death our inordinate affections and appetites, according to the Gospel.

Hitherto the apostle had been condemning the false methods of access to God, and had been speaking of such a rising with Christ as implied a forsaking of the world and a worldly religion ; now he enters on the next branch of real sanctification, the mortifying of the flesh, the crucifying of the interior vices of the mind and will, and the putting to death our whole corrupt nature. Being freed from the bondage and inefficiency of a false and superstitious religion, we must vigorously labour to oppose, subdue, and eradicate all the springs of evil *in our members which are upon the earth.*

By this last expression, we are not to understand the members and parts of the human body, the wonderful work of God ; but something rising up in these members in rebellion against “the law of our renewed mind,” and turning

them into “instruments of unrighteousness unto sin.”¹ The word *members*, then, is here elegantly put for the sins wrought in a great measure by them, and having their chief seat in them, our corrupt nature.

“There being naturally in us,” says Whitby, after Theophylact, “the old man” and “the body of sin; the inordinate affections and lustings of it are styled the members of that body; partly because they exert themselves by the members of the natural body, and partly because, as the members of the body are employed to accomplish the desires of the natural body, so these affections are employed to gratify the desires of the body of sin.”*

These *members* of the whole man are said to be *upon the earth*, because they affect earthly things and disrelish heavenly; they are earthly, sensual, depraved; they creep upon earth, and never rise to Christ; they act in conjunction with the whole mass of things in earth, riches, honour, pleasure, property, fame, as the apostle had just before described every thing here below, which opposed and stood in contrast with “rising with Christ, and setting our affections on things above.”

We mortify these members, or sins in our members, not only by ceasing from the outward acts to which they lead, but from the inward inclination towards them, the first movements, the incipient desires and entertainment of sin.

The expression implies our keeping the will untainted, and the affections unexcited by these vices; and so extinguishing the life, as it were, of the old man. This requires that a deadening force be put upon his corrupt workings; the supplies of life being, so to speak, cut off; no “provision made for the flesh to fulfil the lusts thereof;”² temptations and occasions of sin avoided; the eye, the ear, and the other senses closed to the entrance of evil; and even the lawful

* Whitby in Scott and Bloomfield, in loc.

1) Rom. vi. 19.

2) Rom. xiii. 14.

inclinations habituated to brook denial and delay. Thus the members and limbs of the old man being constantly enfeebled, he is left to die by a lingering unrelenting execution.

I have already remarked that the expression, "buried with Christ," seems rather stronger than being "crucified with him." I may make the observation again here. The mortifying or putting to death our members, being of the same import as the burial of the old man; and both denoting a permanent state of cessation from the motions of sin, as a body deprived of life, from the actions of the busy external world.

In this mighty process of the mortification of sin, which will continue till we put off this our fallen and corrupt tabernacle at the moment of death, there are several points in our apostle's argument to be attended to. Gross sins of impurity are first condemned; then covetousness. Two special reasons for mortifying all these are subjoined. Sins of the temper and tongue are next mentioned. Lastly, a powerful motive for all this duty of mortification concludes this part of the exhortation.

1. The grosser sins of impurity, which fill the world with misery and disorder, and which are open to the observation and abhorrence of mankind, are first enumerated; *fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence*; in which a progress may be traced. The mischief begins in evil concupiscence; it goes on to inordinate and irregular affections; it proceeds to uncleanness, that is, various pollutions following on the two preceding vices; it ends in fornication, both in its common meaning, and also in that of adultery—that is, all connexions without marriage, including the exaggerated guilt of the case, where one of the parties is married already.

The apostle may possibly have had in his eye, in condemning these vices, the rites of Bacchus and Cybele, which were wont to be celebrated with many impurities in Phrygia, of which Colosse, Laodicea, and Hierapolis were cities; and

which conduced exceedingly to deprave the morals of the inhabitants.* These pollutions the false teachers, with their philosophical and Jewish schemes of sanctification, could never reach; but Christ quickening the soul and raising it from the death of sin, effectually enabled the convert to abhor and detest, as the accompaniments of “abominable idolatries.”

2. Covetousness is conjoined with these grosser vices; as “being the root of all evil,” and as generally possessing the hearts of ungodly men when the vices of the flesh, from age, or sickness, or satiety, or a regard to reputation, are forsaken. The two classes, impurity or covetousness, are the vices of the whole heathen and Mahomedan world; they spring from “the reprobate mind,” to which God in judgment gives up those, who, “when they knew God, glorified him not as God.”³ In like manner, the false worship of nominal Christians has ever had the same results. Angel-worship leads in practice to nothing else than the grossest vices; and both are combined with covetousness. Indeed, the temporal power of popery, its wide-spread indulgence to human passions, and its grasping covetousness, are the props of its anti-christian usurpation.

It is observable, that in his Epistle to the Ephesians also, our apostle classes covetousness with the grosser vices of the flesh. “But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints.”⁴

Another and still deeper brand is fixed on it. The apostle terms it *idolatry*; for the love and pursuit of wealth to the injury of our neighbour and violation of our duty to God, is the idolatry of the heart; it transfers the thoughts, the desires, the affections, the confidence, the expectations and notions of happiness from God our Creator and Lord, to vile,

* Macknight in loc.

3) Rom. i. 20.

4) Eph. v. 3.

earthly treasures, to golden dust. Avarice makes a man an idolater, because he does for money, all that he ought to do for God. All experience shows that it is one of the greatest possible hinderances to man's salvation, and the most destructive of all snares to the professors of the Gospel. And so widely does it spread, and so closely cling to the unrenewed mind, that it is commonly applauded by men; and therefore our Lord says, "How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God!"⁵ And the apostles Paul and Peter represent it as one of the main seductions to be guarded against by the minister of Christ. "Feed the flock of God—not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind"⁶—"not greedy of filthy lucre."⁷ "Neither at any time used we flattering words, as ye know, nor a cloak of covetousness; God is witness."⁸

And if the secret trust of the heart, transferred to money, constitute an idolater, I do not stop to ask, whether the open worship of saints and angels, of the Virgin and images, of relics and tombs, do not much more constitute idolatry; whether religious trust and confidence transferred to them from Christ our only Mediator, churches built to their honour, chapels dedicated, altars raised, vows offered, prostrations made, prayers addressed, praises presented, do not constitute an "abomination" in the sight of God infinitely more hateful than that of the eastern or western heathen; and whether the deluge of impurities and of covetousness, which overwhelms countries addicted to this idolatry, does not probably flow from "the reprobate mind," to which, in the case of the Gentiles, St. Paul ascribes it?

3. We come now to the special reasons for mortifying these our members which the apostle subjoins.

For which things sake the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience. Let the tremendous wrath of God hanging over the children of disobedience for these lusts and for covetousness, deter the Colossians from following their

5) Matt. xix. 23.

6) 1 Pet. v. 2.

7) 1 Tim. iii. 3.

8) 1 Thess. ii. 5.

example and sharing their punishment. All motives are to be employed in urging holiness ; not only the infinite love of God and the all-sufficient mediation of Christ : but also “ the terrors of the Lord,” as the apostle elsewhere speaks. For “ the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men,” whether Jews or Gentiles, “ who hold the truth”—whether natural or revealed—“ in unrighteousness.”⁹ If, therefore, the Colossians became like the Gentiles, and held the glorious truth of the Gospel, as the heathen did that of the light of nature and of original tradition from Adam, “ in unrighteousness,” the “ wrath of God ” would smoke against them with a vehemence, in proportion to the bright light they had obscured and darkened.

This wrath of God includes his declared indignation, which daily impends over Pagan nations, and on Christians also who depart from the faith ; and likewise the judgment of the last day. However pleasing the heathen may think their idolatries, and vices, and covetousness, to be to their gods ; or however Christians may flatter themselves that the like evils under softer names are not inconsistent with the Gospel ; yet the truth was that the “ wrath of God ” was so provoked thereby, as to be about to burst in fearful vengeance on their heads.

The other reason is,

In the which ye also walked sometime, when ye lived in them. The argument is from the privation of the cause to the privation of the effect. You lived, indeed, and walked in these vices and idolatries, as though the apostle had said, in your former unregenerate state ; but now they are entirely inconsistent with your character. They are unworthy of the high and holy vocation wherewith you are called. “ The time past of our life may suffice you to have wrought the will of the Gentiles, when you walked in lasciviousness, lusts, excess of wine, revellings, banquetings, and abominable

idolatries. Wherein they think it strange that ye run not with them to the same excess of riot, speaking evil of you. Who shall give account to him who is ready to judge the quick and the dead.”¹⁰

The apostle assigns this reason in order to magnify the grace of God in the change which had been wrought in them ; and to warn them of the danger of being drawn back into their former habits and associations.

4. Sins of the temper and tongue are next enumerated.

But now ye also put off all these ; anger, wrath, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth. Lie not one to another.

“Now ye, also, as though the apostle had said, since ye are Christians, and no longer sinners of the Gentiles ; since ye are “dead with Christ,” and “risen with him,” and waiting his glorious second advent ; “put away,” as sordid and unbecoming garments, or as defiling and unsuitable blemishes and spots, all the other more interior vices of the temper and of the tongue, besides the grosser ones of impurity and covetousness, which are inconsistent with your profession.

To abstain from open vices, may make a respectable heathen ; but to make a true Christian, we must divest ourselves of the secret workings of the malignant passions. These, when uncontrolled, constitute the character of Satan. He is incapable of sensual appetites, having no body ; but he is “the wicked one” pre-eminently, by his hatred to God and goodness, and his malice, blasphemy and lies directed against God and man.

And the apostle requires, without exception, all these dark passions to be renounced. *Put off all these ;* not only one or two upon a few occasions, when we are less tempted, from our cast of mind or circumstances, to indulge them ; but all in every moment of our lives.

¹⁰ 1 Pet. iv. 3-5.

He also classifies these evils. There are three of the heart ; and three of the tongue and conversation.

The three of the heart and temper are *anger*, *wrath*, *malice*. Anger without cause or beyond cause, or retained longer than duty requires—for we are commanded to be “angry ;” but with the limitations of, “sinning not, and not letting the sun go down upon our wrath.” Our Lord “looked round upon the people with anger, being grieved at the hardness of their hearts.” And when Moses saw the calf, “his anger waxed hot.” And again, “he was very wroth,” when Korah, Dathan, and Abiram rebelled against the Lord. So Samuel, when the people demanded a king, and Elijah amongst the priests of Baal, were doubtless moved with a just displeasure and jealousy not unmixed with anger. But so difficult is it to curb the passions, that the Scripture generally condemns it, as in the passage before us, universally.

Wrath is the higher ebullition of anger with longer continuance ; and is entirely and in almost all cases unlawful.

Malice is a diabolical passion altogether ; it involves desire of revenge, secret envy, rancour of mind, inward hatred, designs of retaliation, and an universal ill-will towards the persons, estate and fame of those whom we consider to have injured us. It makes a man unfit for society, suspicious, quarrelsome, dark, treacherous.

If anger exceeds its bounds, it becomes wrath ; if wrath lies brooding in the bosom, it degenerates into malice. So Cain slew his brother Abel, not at the moment when his anger was kindled, but when they were afterwards together in the field. The brethren of Joseph in like manner laid wait for him. And generally it is said of both heathen and Jews, before their conversion, that they “lived in malice and envy, hateful and hating one another.”¹¹

The three evils of the tongue are *blasphemy*, *filthy communication*, *lying*. Blasphemy includes all insinuations

11) Titus iii. 3.

against the nature, attributes, glory, will, Providence and word of God ; whatever takes his holy name in vain ; all ascription of the work of the Holy Ghost to Satan ; all ridicule of the word, truths, and sacred language of holy Scripture ; all rash and presumptuous speeches on God and the way of salvation ; all wicked opposition to the person, glory, mediation and grace of Christ.

St. Paul confesses of himself, that before his conversion he had been a “blasphemer and persecutor, and injurious ;” and had even “compelled others to blaspheme ;” and on this account magnifies “the exceeding abundant grace of Christ” toward him, and considers himself the “chief of sinners.”¹²

Blasphemy in a lower sense may also include all calumny against our fellow-creatures,—perjury, evil-speaking, backbiting, bitter reproaches ; especially for the name of Christ and religion. It embraces further all ridicule of the work of grace in the human heart, all scoffs upon piety, all the contemptuous reproach and contumely uttered against the cause and people of God.

Of *filthy communication* I need scarcely speak. This consists of all impure and corrupt language ; details of scenes of vice ; indelicate allusions, and whatever tends to awaken those images and associations, from which it is the business of Christianity to cleanse the fancy. With these are to be classed the books, the pictures, the representations, the dress, the societies, the places which provoke the same. The miserable excuse that such things are uttered only to excite laughter ; or that such books or scenes are designed to deter from vice, cannot be sustained for a moment. The dry moral is no palliation, as it is no remedy for the detailed exposition of the vices, frequently accompanied with levity and jokes, which preceded it.

I need not observe how completely these apostolic cautions affect generally, novels, tales, stage-plays, races, and

tumultuous assemblies ; to say nothing of a thousand other arguments against these methods of “ making provision for the flesh to fulfil the lusts thereof.”

The apostle adds, *lie not one to another* ; and more fully to the Ephesians with a reason subjoined : “ Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour ; for we are members one of another.” The ninth commandment prohibits this, amongst all other ways of “ bearing false witness against our neighbour.”

The almost total want of truth in heathen and Mahomedan society—the craft, deceit, insincerity, prevarication, concealment—are too palpable before our eyes. Where the God of truth is unknown, the duty of speaking truth, also, as flowing from his divine attributes, must be unknown. How widely, also, various measures of this sin of our fallen nature appear in Christian youth, from childhood, and through all the grades of subsequent life, I need not say. We should, therefore, watch against every approach to it. Lying counteracts the gift of speech, saps the foundation of human intercourse, and overturns the first principles of morals. Sincerity, a perfect conformity between our words and our intentions, is the primary character of the “ new creature in Christ Jesus.”

5. For our apostle assigns, lastly, a powerful motive for all this duty of mortification.

Seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds,—the old Adam—the fallen nature—the corrupt, blind, rebellious, polluted tendencies of our depraved heart ; the flowings forth of the defiled fountain of original sin ; the whole body and mass of the sins of the flesh and spirit in our unawakened and unrenewed state ; *all the members*, in a word, of the old man *which are upon the earth*.

In all this exhortation, the apostle seems still to keep in view the main occasion of the Epistle. The false teachers boasted of their discipline as not sparing man’s body ; as refusing it even necessary nourishment ; as enforcing absti-

nence, and celibacy, and solitude ; as combating all ease and satisfaction, and putting in practice a difficult and extreme self-denial. They commended all this with a show of wisdom before men, a pretended humility of soul which had recourse to the worship and mediation of angels, an effort to go even beyond the express commands of God, and to aim at an absorption of all human passions and feelings in divine contemplation.

The apostle, in opposition to all these beguiling pleas, describes the true and effective mortification which the Gospel enjoins, and which springs from the quickening power of Christ raising men from the death of sin, and carrying them up with him, in heart and affection, to heaven.

Having done this, he shows, in the verses we have been considering, that it is the members of the old man that are to be mortified, and not the necessary support of the animal frame : that it is fornication, lasciviousness, and filthy communication, that are to be put away, and not meats and drinks ; that it is covetousness, with its idolatry, that is to be renounced, not outward conveniences for the body ; that it is all the black malignant passions that are to be killed, and not the external and indifferent things which perish with the using ; that it is lying that is to be watched against, and not mere outward courtesies ; that all this is to be done, not with a "voluntary humility and worshipping of angels," not with an "intrusion into things not seen," not with a mind vainly puffed up" with its own inventions, not with "a show of wisdom" without the reality ; but by a genuine and filial humility which submits to God's revelation, a true worship of the only Mediator, a lowliness of mind which dares neither to take from nor to add to the revealed mysteries of the atonement and intercession of the Son of God ; a real wisdom which acquiesces in the wisdom of Christ ; and seeks, by rising with him from an earthly and debasing system of self-invented traditions, to derive strength for really mortifying the old man with its members and lusts.

LECTURE XXVIII.

THE NEW MAN—CHRIST ALL AND IN ALL.

COL. iii. 10, 11.

10. *And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him.*

11. *Where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free; but Christ is all and in all.*

WE now enter upon a most important part of our Epistle. The former verses related to mortification of sin; these, to the life of holiness. The former, to negative sanctification; these, to positive; the former, to the "putting off the old man;" these, to the *putting on of the new man*; the former, to the "ceasing to do evil;" these, to the "learning to do well."¹

The apostle's words, in these weighty verses, will require us to consider what we are to understand by the expression, *the new man*—what by the abrogation of all distinctions of nation and birth with respect to him—and what by the description of the proper centre and source of his life, wherever he is found, *Christ all and in all*.

1. St. Paul here still pursues his argument drawn from the Christian's burial and resurrection with Christ, as the grand remedy for all the disorders and errors at Colosse. He varies, however, the figure. In allusion to the white garments with which the primitive converts, having first laid aside their heathen vestments, were wont to be arrayed, he exhorts them to "put off the old man with his deeds, and to put on the new man." Christians should no more dishonour God and disgrace religion by any of the vices and passions of their natural state, than a courtier should insult his prince by appearing before him in squalid and ragged attire.

1) Isa. i. 16, 17.

But this is not enough—this is negative merely. The Christian must also actually array himself in the white and becoming dress of his new character and relation; as a courtier would not only abstain from insulting his prince by wearing defiled and mean garments, but would also be studious to attire himself, when approaching his presence, with the suitable and ornamental dress which he knew was required.

Such is the figure. The new man itself is that combined system, and body of spiritual graces and virtues which constitute the Christian life; just as that combined system, and body of vices which we derive from the first Adam, constitute the old man. And as the old man has “his members upon the earth,” so the new has his members and affections in heaven.

Whatever we bring with us from the womb of our mother is the old man; whatever we receive by the grace of the Holy Spirit is the new.

As the old consists in a death in sin and an enmity of heart to God, so the new consists in a life of grace, and love to Christ and heavenly things.

The old man precedes in point of time in all of us, because we are first born in Adam; the new follows after, when we are born of “the second Adam, the Lord from heaven.”

Each is known by its appropriate feelings and acts; even as the natural and animal life is discerned by its peculiar actions and sensibilities.

And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him.

This refers to the creation of our first parents. For then it was our Almighty Creator said, “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea,” “and over all the earth.” “So God created man,” proceeds the inspired historian, “in his own image; in the image of God created he him;” “and God

blessed them, and God said, Be fruitful and multiply, and replenish the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over every living thing that is upon the earth.”²

This image of God consisted chiefly in man’s resemblance to the moral attributes of his Creator. There was, indeed, a distant resemblance also to his natural image in man’s understanding, the governing faculty ; in his memory and affections obeying its dictates ; in his will directing all the other faculties ; in his conscience judging his actions with reference to the divine law ; in his capacity of knowing, loving, and obeying, as a reasonable and accountable creature, his Maker ; all followed by some distant and feeble likeness to him, also, in his sovereignty and dominion over the lower creatures, as bestowed upon him by his bountiful Lord.

But the moral likeness to his all-glorious Maker was the principal part of man’s honour. This is taught in the verse before us and some similar ones. In the passage now under consideration we learn that the new man is *renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him*. In the correspondent verse of the Epistle to the Ephesians, the new man is described as being “after God created in righteousness and true holiness.”³ Once more, in the same Epistle, the Christian convert is said to be “God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works.”⁴ In another Epistle, also, we are told, “If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature,” (or new creation,) “old things are passed away ; behold, all things are become new.”⁵ And in reference to this new creation the prophet Isaiah describes the Almighty as saying generally of every one that is called by his name, “I have created him for my glory, I have formed him, yea, I have made him.”⁶

So that knowledge, righteousness, true holiness, and a disposition to delight in all good works, constitute the main

2) Gen. i. 26, 27, 28.

3) Eph. iv. 24.

4) Eph. ii. 10.

5) 2 Cor. v. 17.

6) Isa. xliii. 7.

parts of the image of God in which Adam was created ; the dominion over the creature accompanying it.

This image of his Maker he by transgression lost ; it has been effaced in all his descendants ; and is only restored in and through the sacrifice and mediation of Christ, and by the power of his Spirit in redemption.

Thus the new man is in his measure (for the work is gradual) what Adam was before the fall, and what the saints before the throne of God now are, with the modifications of holy principles imposed by his ruined state and the vast means devised of Almighty God for his recovery.

i. Of the five particulars, or rather the four, in which the moral image of God consists—for the dominion over the creature is only an accompaniment—the apostle selects *knowledge*, in the case of the Colossian converts. The understanding is the noblest faculty. He had before prayed that they might be “filled with the knowledge of God’s will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding.” He had expressed his earnest conflict for them that they might come to “the full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgment of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ ; in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.”

As Adam before the fall had an understanding unclouded by error, and prepared to imbibe all the knowledge communicated to him by his Creator ; as he had a judgment free from corrupt bias, a will disposed to obedience, and affections regulated according to reason and truth ; so the new man is *renewed in knowledge* ; he has a disposition to receive and entertain all that his blessed Saviour reveals to him in his Word ; to comprehend something of the character of his Creator, of himself, of his position and duties, of the law under which he is placed, of his obligations, his interests, the guilt and consequence of sin ; of the fall and the corruption of his nature ; of the way of salvation ; of the misery of the

world; of his own condemnation and helplessness; of the redemption of Christ, and the work of the Holy Spirit.

“The natural man receiveth not,” indeed, “the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him;”⁷ but the new man has “the eyes of his understanding enlightened.”⁸ “God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in his heart, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.”⁹

This renewal, then, in knowledge especially regarded the person and offices of Christ as the only Mediator; on which the apostle had insisted so fully in the preceding parts of his Epistle; and his selection of this part of the divine image had a tacit allusion to all the blindness and prejudices of the Jewish and philosophizing doctors of Colosse, who were aiming at extinguishing the light of heavenly truth, and transferring men’s faith to angels and saints, to abrogated ceremonies and endless austerities.

ii. But though this was the principal branch of the divine image on which the apostle thought it right to insist in the case of the Colossians, it was not the only one. The new man is “renewed also in righteousness;” his affections will receive an upright and just direction; so that truth, equity, justice between man and man, benevolence, integrity, honour, sincerity, all the ten Commandments are exhibited in his temper and conduct.

iii. He is renewed also “in true holiness.” Righteousness is distributive justice; holiness a dedication of heart to God; righteousness is a series of separate just actions; holiness breathes the very atmosphere of purity; righteousness is one branch of virtue, holiness the combination of all; righteousness falls in its effects chiefly under the notice of man; holiness under that of God. It includes the love of God, hatred of sin as sin, delight in communion with “the

7) 1 Cor. ii. 14.

8) Eph. i. 18.

9) 2 Cor. iv. 6.

Father of spirits," and a longing and effort to be "holy as he is holy."

The emphatic word "true"—not holiness merely, but "true holiness,"—would remind the Colossians of the vast difference between a pretended and superstitious holiness taught by the commandments of men, and the true internal and spiritual holiness infused by the Spirit of God, and regulated by his blessed will in Christ Jesus.

iv. The disposition to every good work followed; a readiness to the performance of all the actions of a Christian life; "a creation in Christ Jesus to good works which God had before ordained that he should walk in them;"¹⁰ a delight not only in contemplative piety, but in active virtue, in works of beneficence, in "visiting the widows and fatherless in their affliction,"¹¹ in "walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless;"¹² in showing that he belongs to a "peculiar people zealous of good works;"¹³ in "letting," in a word, "his light so shine before men, that they may see his good works, and glorify his Father which is in heaven."¹⁴

Thus the new man resembles once more, in some faint degree, the perfections of his Maker; he bears his image in his moral attributes; he exhibits a distant resemblance of the divine righteousness, holiness, beneficence; but especially he is "renewed in the spirit of his mind," in knowledge, the noblest part of man. And thus he proceeds, "renewed day by day," till he is fully conformed to Christ, and is brought to heaven, where all the remains of sin will be removed, and he will be presented "a glorious creature," "not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing."¹⁵

His dominion over the creatures, also, accompanying his resemblance to his Maker in his natural and moral attributes, though weakened by the fall, still is restored in some degree in this world. But the glorious fulfilment of the promise

10) Ephes. ii. 10.

11) James i. 27.

12) Luke i. 6.

13) Tit. ii. 14.

14) Matt. v. 16.

15) Ephes. v. 27.

hidden under that dominion, is in the person of the God-man, our Lord and Saviour, who is "set over the works of God's hands;" and who, though not as yet, will still hereafter have "all things" actually "put in subjection under him;" being now already in our nature, "after the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour."¹⁶

2. Can we wonder, then, at the abrogation of all distinctions of nature and birth with respect to this new man?

Where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, bond nor free.

Such is the apostle's declaration. The connecting word, *where*, refers to the new creature, and teaches us that in respect of this transcendent change of "putting off the old man and putting on the new," in being *renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him, there is neither Greek nor Jew*. This is the first of the four classes of persons which the apostle enumerates. For he distributes mankind into four pairs or couples, the most remote from each other, the most different in manners, pursuits, religion, habits, and degrees of civilization; but which distinctions were all swallowed up in the mighty transformation of the Gospel, whenever it really took place.

The apostle adds this for two reasons, the one to strengthen his caution against judaizing and philosophizing teachers who would draw away the Colossians from Christ, and insist upon superadditions to his mediation and grace. No; as though the apostle had said, Christianity wants none of these additions; yea, they are entirely foreign from its nature and a denial of its completeness. It came from the divine hand, simple and perfect in all its parts, as all the works of the great God. Man can only mar, instead of improving it. An open and wide access to a reconciled Father is "consecrated for us" all by the "new and living way of the blood of Christ," who is "our high priest over the house of God,"

¹⁶) Heb. ii. 8, 9.

and through whom we may draw near in common "with a true heart and full assurance of faith."¹⁷

The other reason is to promote love and charity amongst all the Colossian converts, of whatever nation or religion they may have previously been. They were all "new creatures" in the same Saviour, renewed by knowledge, righteousness, true holiness, and obedience by the same Spirit; members of the same mystical body of which Christ is the head; admitted to the same privileges, hopes, supports, and promises; and sharing, in the person of their triumphant Saviour, in the same dominion over the creatures, and the ultimate subjection of all things under his feet.

i. The first pair mentioned by our apostle is *the Greek and Jew*, including all the learned and polished philosophers on the one hand; and the Jewish doctors and teachers on the other; both of whom had been corrupting the Colossian church. The distinctions are now all carried away in the overwhelming flood of grace. Let them be but new men in Christ Jesus, and the Gospel inquires as to nothing else.

ii. The second pair, *circumcision and uncircumcision*, is an amplification of the first class, and refers to those amongst the converts who believed in Christ, and who yet were in danger of being enticed and beguiled by Jewish notions of the necessity of circumcision, as a stepping-stone to philosophical fables about angels, and to endless austerities and traditions of men. Circumcision is specified because the debates amongst the converts began with this point. The question was, whether an introduction to the covenant of grace could take place without this initiatory ordinance. This our apostle had before decided; and he now sweeps away the whole basis of the contention. "In Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature,"¹⁸ as he elsewhere speaks.

iii. The third couple, *barbarian and Scythian*, seems put for the nations most widely separated from each other, and

¹⁷ Heb. x. 25.

¹⁸ Gal. vi. 15.

also most completely removed from the Jews and Greeks in point of civilization and national power, wealth, and influence.

The Barbarian, so called possibly from an Arabic term, Barbar, are supposed to represent the wild tribes in the southern parts of Africa, removed by the Mediterranean and Egyptian seas from the rude Scythians in the north, which was a common name for the Germani, Sarmatæ, and others. The apostle's meaning is that the most remote and unpolished nations, however wild and uncivilized, were all "one in Christ Jesus." Let only the new man appear in them, and their original ferociousness or indolence would yield to the power of grace; "the wolf would dwell with the lamb, and the leopard lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together."¹⁹

In our missions, these transformations are to be seen, as the Gospel spreads; the prostrate, passive Hindoo, the fierce Mohammedan, the stupid Hottentot, and wild demon-worshiper,* are mollified and humanized by the grace of Christ.

iv. The last class are the largest and most widely spread amongst the human race. *There is neither bond nor free.* They embrace, indeed, the whole family of man. However the slave might be despised, treated as not a reasonable creature, sold with the estate of his master who had the power of life and death over him, remain uneducated, unpitied, unprotected, and accounted of no value; all the degradation was effaced in the excellence of the change in Christ Jesus, and a new glory and beauty put upon him.

The free, likewise, of every nation, with all their proud boasts of superiority, and their insults on their dependent bondmen, were humbled and brought low by the same mighty renewal; and accounted brethren with them in Christ.

* See the admirable Remains of Mr. Cecil, published by my valued friend, the Rev. Josiah Pratt, of which the thirteenth edition has just appeared.

Where, then, were the false teachers who were setting up erroneous distinctions, "requiring a sign" with the Jew, or "seeking after wisdom" with the Greek; where were the followers of Plato or Pythagoras with their angels and traditions; where the disputers for or against circumcision; where those who contemned the Barbarian and Scythian as incapable of grace? Where the oppressor of the bondmen, and where the partisan of those who were free? all, all were swept away. The Lord Christ made all things new.

3. *But Christ is all and in all.* This is the proper centre and source of life to the new man wherever he is found. To him Christ is every thing, the beginning and the end, and in all parts of the world and in all persons. Christ is all in the church and in all the faithful. "All things are delivered to him of the Father;" there is no Christian man in the world in whom he doth not live and work by his grace. He who has Christ, in him has "all things relating to life and godliness," all "the exceeding great and precious promises of the Gospel;" "Wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption;" reconciliation, acceptance, peace, adoption, joy in the Holy Ghost, the inheritance of heaven.

Then why should not all be accounted partakers of Christ without difference? Why should not the Greek and Jew embrace each other? Why should not the Barbarian and Scythian, though separated by the poles, be brought together? Why should not the bondman "leap as a hart," in the liberty of Christ; and the freeman acknowledge himself the Lord's servant? Why should not Christ be glorified in us as our all in acceptance with God, and in love to our Christian brethren? What have we to do with angel-mediation, and human commandments, when we have all in Christ? What have we to do with dividing Christ and separating his work, and parting off one half to angels and to observances "which perish with the using;" and leaving the other half only to Christ himself?

What a sublime conclusion of the apostle's argument!

I have already observed that it is one of the summaries of the Epistle ; and I might add of the whole Bible ! Christ is not only “our hope of glory ;” we are not only “complete in him ;” but he is *our all, and in all* the faithful all over the world. Shall it, then, be said of us, that, “beguiled of our reward,” we no longer “hold him as the Head ?” No, brethren ; let us rather determine with our apostle, “God forbid that we should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world”—in all the amplitude of its term—the Jewish and philosophical world ; “is crucified unto me, and I unto the world !”²⁰

But another remark must be here made. The expression we are considering, *Christ is all and in all*, is manifestly of like import with the apostle’s language in various passages concerning God our heavenly Father. “For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.”²¹ “That God may be all in all.” “To us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him ; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him.”²² Compare this language with our apostle’s in this Epistle, “All things were created by him and for him ; and he is before all things ; and by him all things consist. In him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily ;” *Christ is all and in all* ; and then tell me whether the proper divinity of our Lord is not as clear as the sun shining in its strength.

Proclaim, then, ye heralds of grace, the tidings to all the world ; carry it, ye ministers of salvation, to the most distant lands. Hear it, ye trembling penitents, *Christ is all and in all*.

If this does not meet the views of our modern divines warped by Romanist errors ; if it ruffle them, and appear extravagant ; depend upon it, it is their mistake, not St. Paul’s.

I know the way in which they evade this text and others,

20) Gal. vi. 14.

21) Rom. xi. 36.

22) 1 Cor. xv. 28 ; viii. 6.

by speaking perpetually of means, of the church, and of the sacraments. No one is more anxious, as I have repeatedly testified in these lectures, to enforce in their due place, order and discipline, and sacraments, and subjection to pastors, than myself. But all this affects not the apostle's statement. He knew the subordinate matters needful to the carrying out the details of the Gospel better than we. He knew there were the historical books of Scripture, the devotional, the moral, the prophetic, better than we. He knew all he had written or was about to write on the sketch of church government he was commissioned to prescribe, better than we. But this did not prevent him from proclaiming as with a trumpet's voice, *Christ is all and in all*; nor should it prevent us. Christ is all we want, all we can require, and all the Gospel proposes to us, both for merit and for grace, for justification and sanctification; and this in all persons of all climes, and under all conditions and circumstances.

Let this one gigantic truth fill our souls, and every thing will sink into dwarfish insignificance. On the other hand, if we pass slightly by this truth and allow petty matters, "the tithing of mint, anise, and cummin," to fill up the narrow space of our minds, there will be no room for the Lord of glory. And if with yet more presumptuous arrogance we lean to a church which worships saints, angels, and images of the Virgin, and relics and tombs of martyrs, with whatever inferior devotion, as they pretend; we rob Christ of his honour, and degrade him from his glory as our *all and in all*.

Cling therefore, beloved, to the complete and all-sufficient Saviour and Mediator. And especially in hours of temptation like the present; times of sorrow, of controversy, of darkness; of prevalent apostacy, of superstition, of the triumph of error. Make him your refuge, your deliverer, your hope, your rock of safety, your foundation, your all.

And when the moment of death approaches, may we each be enabled to say with our apostle, "To me to live is Christ;

and to die is gain ;” or with St. Stephen, “ Lord Jesus, receive my spirit ;”²³ or in the words before us, *Christ is to me all and in all.*

LECTURE XXIX.

THE GRACES AND VIRTUES OF THE RENEWED CHRISTIAN.

COL. iii. 12—15.

12. *Put on, therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering.*

13. *Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any : even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye.*

14. *And above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness.*

15. *And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body ; and be ye thankful.*

THE apostle having stripped the old man of his disgraceful and sordid attire, and having described the general interior principles of the new man as “ renewed after the image of God,” and as accounting Christ the centre and source of his life, proceeds to adorn him with the comely vestments in which he may appear as he ought in the discharge of his duties in the church and the world.

There is nothing more remarkable in Christianity than the variety and harmony of the graces and virtues it inculcates. They resemble the several distinctive garments, prepared for arraying in a suitable manner the new-born Christian disciple ; nothing is omitted that can qualify him to “ adorn the doctrine of God his Saviour in all things.” And the ample exterior robe of charity thrown over the whole,

23) Phil. i. 21 ; Acts vii. 59.

with the peace of God balancing and ruling his heart within, complete his ornamental apparel, and the meek temper in which he is to wear it ; whilst the whole is accompanied with a variety of exalted motives to induce him to put on the several parts of it with the greater care.

This portion of our apostle's instruction is the more important, because it especially tends to correct the incidental ill consequences of the earnest contention against fundamental errors as to the mediation of Christ, which he had urged upon them in his second chapter, and in which it was essential to their salvation that they should engage. For the danger of disunion, harsh judgments, and unforgiving tempers in such a case, was, through human infirmity, so great, that it was needful to dwell on the mild and gentle graces of Christianity with the more fervour.

In these verses, we shall have to notice some motives to the Christian for arraying himself aright, derived from the high privileges he enjoyed, v. 12 ; the articles of attire which he should put on ; supported by an additional motive, v. 12 and 13 ; the great importance of charity, as an exterior robe to be thrown over them. Lastly, the inward balance and rule of the mind in carrying out all these directions, v. 14.

2. *Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved.*

The force of the word *therefore*, which connects this exhortation with the preceding one, refers us to that solemn profession which the Colossians had made of having "risen with Christ," and having "put off the old man with his deeds," and of having "put on the new man, that was renewed after the image of him that created him," and was independent of distinctions of race and country, and absorbed in "Christ as his all and in all."

Let them, *therefore*,—things being so,—their profession being so exalted,—the vocation wherewith they were called so high,—put on all the Christian graces, as the suitable attire of their new state.

As the elect of God, holy and beloved. The epithets here

applied to them have each the force of a motive. For the inspired writers use no titles or names, either as respects the ever blessed God or Christian believers, without a reference to the especial argument they are enforcing. Did the Colossians, then, humbly hope that they were really among the chosen servants of God, or, as the apostle terms them, the elect; taken out of the mass of a fallen race by the divine mercy, "according as they were chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world, that they should be holy and without blame before him in love;"¹ then let them act agreeably to their high calling. Let their "work of faith and labour of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ, in the sight of God and our Father," enable them scripturally to "know" and deduce, as our apostle teaches the Thessalonians to do, "their election of God."² Let the infinite mercy of God "who had saved them, and called them with an holy calling, not according to their works, but according to his own purpose and grace which was given them in Christ Jesus before the world began,"³ lead them to practise diligently all those blessed graces and tempers by which they might "make their calling and election sure."⁴

For the most merciful will of God in their election would be accompanied, if it were scripturally and humbly deduced in their case, as in others, with an universal holiness of heart and life; they would be choice, elect Christians, set apart for God as a "peculiar people zealous of good works;" they would be "consecrated and meet for the Master's use, as vessels of honour;" holiness would be the habitual character, and aim, and delight, and employment of their lives. Being "created after God in righteousness and true holiness," the effect of that internal renewal would be that they would be holy persons, "partakers of a divine nature," having "escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust."⁵

A further privilege follows, and constitutes another pow-

1) Eph. i. 4. 2) 1 Thess. i. 3, 4. 3) 2 Tim. i. 9. 4) 2 Pet. i. 10. 5) 2 Pet. i. 4.

erful motive; they were, *as the elect of God*, not only *holy*, but *beloved*, the objects of God's especial love, of "the favour which he beareth unto his people;"⁶ of his gracious delight, acquiescence, and benevolent regard, in Christ Jesus. "We love him, because he first loved us."⁷ "Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed on us, that we should be called the sons of God."⁸ And, if we indeed love Christ and keep his commandment, "the Father will love us, and come and make his abode with us."⁹

With such motives derived from our profession of having "risen with Christ," of having "put on the new man," of being amongst the chosen and elected servants of God, *holy and beloved*, surely we shall attire ourselves in the becoming vesture of our filial relation to God; surely we shall reflect on others something of that mercy and love which we have received ourselves.

It is one part of the sincere Christian character to be influenced by motives derived from the blessings we receive in Christ our Lord. Others may abuse them, neglect the consequences to be deduced from them, overstate some one part or understate another; and hold them merely as articles of a national creed; but the true servant of God employs them for the ends for which they were bestowed, and in the spirit of the new creature in Christ Jesus.

Put on, therefore, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering; forbearing one another, and forgiving one another. Above all, put on charity; and let the peace of God rule in your hearts.

In these words the apostle enumerates the graces or dispositions of mind which form so many articles of the Christian apparel. We shall find six separate graces and tempers. The disposition which leads us to aid others. The habit of mind from which this must flow. The effect of this habit as to the less or greater affronts we may meet with. The carrying out of these dispositions into practice with a

6) Ps. cvi. 4.

7) 1 John iv. 19.

8) John iii. 1.

9) John xiv. 23.

special additional motive subjoined. The exterior robe to be thrown over the whole. The internal state of the heart in wearing the comely garments prepared.

All these are to be *put on* as articles of dress. The figure is taken, as we have said, from the white robes with which the converts were arrayed at their baptism in the primitive church.

1. *Bowels of mercies, kindness*, form the disposition which leads us to aid others; not merely mercy, but *bowels of mercies*, the interior affections, a heartfelt and deeply-seated sympathy.

The expression is taken from the Hebrew idiom, in allusion to the effect on the human frame of strong emotions of pity. So it is said of Joseph, that "his bowels did yearn over his brethren, and that he sought where to weep."¹⁰ The prophet Isaiah also thus appeals to the Almighty, "Where is the sounding of thy bowels and thy mercies?"¹¹ And St. Paul, "I long after you all in the bowels of the Lord Jesus."¹²

It is not enough that we let pity be visible in the countenance, or appear in the eyes, or sound forth in the tongue; we must feel the ills of others as our own. Their sorrows must go down into our hearts, and touch them with a real pain and uneasiness. We must "rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep."¹³

From this *kindness* or benignity, a disposition to relieve others, will flow. A hard, selfish, unfeeling, cold heart is a characteristic of fallen, unrenewed man; *bowels of mercies and kindness* of the renewed one.

The first division has respect to the miseries of our fellow-creatures.

2. *Humbleness of mind* is the moral habit from which this must spring. Because, if men are high-minded, full of conceit of themselves, vain, proud, arrogant, they can never feel bowels of mercies and kindness for others.

10) Gen. xliii. 30.

11) Isaiah xliii. 15.

12) Phil. i. 8.

13) Rom. xii. 15.

It requires some sense of our own ill desert before God, of our guilt, our demerit, our small attainments compared with others, to feel a hearty compassion for the miserable.

The proud man is too full of himself to feel for others ; he is always in quarrels, always dissatisfied, always provoking debate, always embroiling the family, the church, the social circle where he lives.

This second branch of duty regards the contempt and despite which he may have to endure.

3. *Meekness, long-suffering*, are the effects of this habit of humility ; which produces in the countenance, manner, voice, language, *meekness*, as to the lesser offences and petty occasions of displeasure ; *long-suffering*, as to continued and higher griefs and irritations ; *meekness* exercising itself in what we term matters of chagrin, impertinence, folly ; *long-suffering* in those of outrage, affront, injury.

This third class directs us how to behave under neglect and irritation.

4. *Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any*. This regards the carrying out of these virtues into daily practice. The apostle adds it in order the better to illustrate the real force of the several preceding dispositions and graces, and to guard against hypocrisy and mere emotions, without actually putting them into effect.

Bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering, if they are sincere, will show themselves by their appropriate acts. We shall not break off all connexion with those who offend us, or whose humour we do not like ; but shall forbear ; wait ; be silent for a time, and look out for favourable moments of reconciliation. And even if our forbearance should be abused, and injury be inflicted, we shall be ready heartily to forgive seventy times seven, as our Lord teaches us in the parable of the ten thousand talents.

There are two things to be noted in this part of the apos-

tle's exhortation. He supposes that mutual need of these graces will occur; and therefore he says, Forbearing *one another*, and forgiving *one another*. It is myself to-day; it is you to-morrow; it is a third and fourth brother on the succeeding days that will need help and pardon. It is never on one side only that the fault exists. It is *one another*, each in his turn, that gives and receives forbearance.

The universality also of the command is to be noted, *If any man have a quarrel against any*. The terms are of the widest range; whatever occasion of offences may arise; whatever cause of complaint (for in the margin, instead of quarrel we read complaint) in any man under any circumstances, and however just the complaint may appear to him; still let him forbear and forgive. This fourth division has respect to the actual injuries of life.

Well may Tertullian say, "What have the philosopher and the Christian like to each other; the disciple of Greece, and of heaven; the merchant of fame, and of life; the dealer in words and in works?"¹⁴ And we add, What have the Jewish zealots, and the followers of angel-worship, and the imposers of endless tradition, in common with St. Paul's Christian convert, thus adorned with the mild and effective graces which flow from the true doctrine of Christ's mediation, and the Spirit poured out as the purchase of it into the heart?

The apostle adds to this branch of duty an additional motive, "even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye." Observe the position in which the apostle places this motive. It is after he had commanded them to forbear one another, and forgive one another, if any man had a quarrel against any; that, knowing as he did, the extreme difficulty of the duty, he supports it with the strongest and most overwhelming motive. So, in the epistle to the Ephesians, "Be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you."¹⁵

Where mark, I pray you, the proof of the proper divinity

14) Apud. Dav. in loc

15) Eph. iv. 32.

of Christ. For “who can forgive sins but God only?” And indeed, in the text of the epistle to the Ephesians, it is ascribed to our heavenly Father. “God hath forgiven you;” as being the highest prerogative of the great Judge and Sovereign of all to pardon sins. And yet the apostle unequivocally ascribes this power in the text before us to the Lord Christ, because “he and the Father are one;” and “whatever the Father doeth, that doeth the Son likewise.”¹⁶ For “God was in Christ,” and thus “reconciling the world unto himself.”¹⁷

The force of this motive it is impossible fully to appreciate. Our faults were without number, our guilt inexcusable, our misery helpless; and yet Christ forgave us. And at what a price? His incarnation, his sacrifice, his blood, his bitter death upon the cross!

We complain of the number, the repetition, the exaggerations of our neighbour’s ill conduct; but what are they to ours against God our heavenly Father, and Christ our Saviour and Master? The atonement and sacrifice of Christ cannot be received with a lively faith, except it work a spirit of forgiveness towards others. The debt of ten thousand talents cannot be forgiven us, if we remit not the two hundred pence which our brother owes us. The plea in our Lord’s prayer stands unchanged, “Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive them that trespass against us.”

Here all the preceding topics of our epistle come in with a tenfold force. The “mystery hidden from ages and generations.” The “translation into the kingdom of God’s dear Son.” The “redemption in his blood.” Christ “the image of the invisible God;” the treasures of wisdom and knowledge;” yea, “the fulness of the Godhead bodily dwelling in him;” our being “complete in Christ; our life hid with Christ in God;” our “putting off the old and putting on the new man;” all are referred to and implied in the one motive before us; *even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye.*

Such, then, is the list which our apostle enumerates;

16) John v. 19.

17) 2 Cor. v. 19.

such the articles of attire with which the new man is to be arrayed.

3. *But above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness.* This is the exterior robe to be thrown over the rest of our attire, and to be girded closely about us. Without this blessed temper, which St. Paul so beautifully describes in his thirteenth chapter of the first epistle to the Corinthians, all our graces and acts will be deficient. Charity must be added to the ornamental dress already furnished, as the ample robe, which, when girded about us, will defend and adorn our other garments. It is *the bond of perfectness.*

It may be justly thus described, as being of greater extent than any other virtue. Mercy and kindness, and humbleness and forgiveness, are separate graces; but love embraces them all, regards generally our neighbour and those in adversity, our friends and enemies, the good and the bad. It binds together all the single virtues, and collects them into its ample embrace; mercy to console those whom it loves; kindness to succour them, humility to sit at their feet; meekness to soothe them, patience to sustain their infirmities; forbearance and forgiveness to blot out their offences; all are included in charity.

Again, without charity all other graces are vain and delusive. Mercy without it is weakness; humility, debasement; meekness, cajolery and deceit; patience, stupidity; forgiveness, hypocrisy; all is inconsistent, heartless, wayward, selfish. We are as "sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal." But charity gives life, force, meaning, truth, permanence to the whole.

Once more, *Charity is the bond of perfectness*, as it supplies the want or remedies the defect of any other graces and virtues. For we are always falling short in one or other, from indwelling sin, from temptation, from cast of character, from peculiar circumstances. A sweet charitable temper provides the articles of Christian attire in which we are from

time to time most defective, supplies their place, hides their imperfections, remedies the ill effects of their absence.

4. The internal state of the heart, as the result of these various graces, is the last finish of the Christian character, and balances his mind whilst attiring himself in these habits and dispositions, and throwing over them the external mantle of charity ; v. 15, *And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body, and be ye thankful.* *The peace of God*—not of the world—not of the Jewish or philosophical teachers, but of God ; that which he bestows upon his people, founded on his reconciliation with them in Christ Jesus “by the blood of his cross.” Let this peace rule within them as the umpire of all their differences, and they would be influenced by it to live peaceably with all men. Especially this would enable them “to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace ;” seeing they had been *called in one body*, as united in Christ their head ; for which it behooved them to be exceedingly *thankful*, and to show their gratitude in this manner, and in every other way by which they possibly could.

What a blessed religion is Christianity ! how sublime in its mysteries, how complete in the salvation it reveals, how consoling in the mediation of the one Lord and Master of all, to which it directs our confidence—how spiritual and elevated in its internal principles—how efficient in its doctrine of mortification of sin—how broad in its basis of virtue in the “putting off the old and putting on the new man”—how beautiful and lovely in the attire with which it adorns this new man !

The internal evidence to the truth of Christianity from this combination is overwhelming ; and the contrast between this real method of our sanctification and the inventions of men, is the more striking at every step of the apostle’s exhortation. Shall we then overturn all the doctrine of Christ’s sole and undivided glory, by angel-invocation, in order to please the philosopher of this world ; or shall we substitute

Pythagorean or Jewish abstinences and traditions for the lovely fabric of Christian morals and virtues, to please the followers of a self-righteous and blind scheme of superstition? God forbid!

Let us, on the contrary, “cast away more and more the works of darkness, and put on the armour of light; let us walk honestly as in the day, not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying; but let us put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and not make provision for the flesh to fulfil the lusts thereof.”¹⁸

Let us, to advert again to the garments of beauty provided for us in our apostle’s enumeration, be more and more diligent and attentive to our moral habits and tempers.

Many are nice and particular in adjusting their external dress, but very negligent of what is spiritual and internal. It is observable in all societies and nations of men, that, as they advance in knowledge and civilization, they are more regardful of a becoming appearance when they go forth from their privacy to the discharge of their social and public duties. Let us imitate them by growing in the knowledge and sanctification of Christianity! Let us put on our suitable attire! Let us be minutely attentive to every, the smallest thing in our spirit and conduct! Let us not only inquire whether we dishonour our profession, but whether we walk so honourably with respect to it as we should. Many about us cannot understand our doctrines, our motives, our hopes; but they may be won by seeing the light mildly reflected upon them from the beautiful garments of holiness with which we are arrayed.

And thus may we all aim at receiving at last the commendation of our Lord addressed to the church of Sardis: “Thou hast a few names even in Sardis that have not defiled their garments, and they shall walk with me in white, for they are worthy.”¹⁹

18) Rom. xiii. 12—14

19) Rev. iii. 4.

LECTURE XXX.

STUDY OF THE WORD OF GOD—SACRED PSALMODY—DOING ALL
IN THE NAME OF CHRIST.

COL. iii. 16, 17.

16. *Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.*

17. *And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks unto God and the Father by him.*

OUR apostle comes now to the third means of our rising more and more to a heavenly taste. The study of the Holy Scriptures; the letting *the word of Christ dwell in us richly*, so as to supply us with the matter of sacred psalms, and teach and direct us to *do all in the name and to the glory of the Lord Jesus*.

The first clause of these verses is obviously the most important, as leading to all the rest. Here then let us consider, in what respects the holy Scriptures are the word of Christ; then, the manner in which they are to be studied; and the refutation of the whole Romanist system as to the suppression and supercession of the Bible, which the exhortation contains.

1. For by the *Word of Christ*, our apostle seems to have meant the whole of the inspired Scriptures; not excluding the word or doctrine of Christ as preached by the apostles "with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven," and afterwards communicated in written epistles; but embracing the whole volume of inspiration. The universal terms employed, and the reference to the Book of Psalms in the following clause of the verse, appear to imply a well-known book, acknowledged and received as the Word of God or the holy Scriptures; and this, I conceive, the apostle calls, with a

particular view to the case of the Colossians, *the Word of Christ*.

And the Holy Bible may well be thus styled as containing our Lord's personal preaching of the Gospel with his own lips ; as revealing the mystery of his redemption ; as dictated by his Spirit ; and as terminating, in all its parts and bearings, in the manifestation of his glory.

For the holy Scriptures contain our Lord's personal teaching ; all the Gospel in its main particulars, as preached by him when he was on earth. The four Gospels are only the narrative of the words of Christ proclaiming salvation to man. His divine voice preached the good tidings ; appealed to the Old Testament Scriptures ; gave a divine attestation to the law of Moses, the Psalms, and the prophets ; formed the connecting link of the old and new dispensation ; and exhibited the first specimens of the "opening the door of faith to the Gentiles." For example, we read on one occasion, that when our Lord "came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, there was delivered to him the Book of the prophet Isaiah, and when he had opened the book, he found the place where it was written, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the Gospel to the poor, to bind up the broken-hearted ;" "and he closed the book," "and began to say unto them, This day is this Scripture fulfilled in your ears."¹

But the Scriptures, in all their amplitude, are the word of Christ, as revealing the mystery of his great redemption, with a continually increasing development. "The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy."² From the very fall of man, a revelation of the future Messiah was made in the brief but pregnant promise of "the seed of the woman." Then followed Abel's sacrifice ; the covenant with Noah ; the call of Abraham, and the Mosaic types, ceremonies, priesthood, and great day of atonement, all typical and prophetic of Christ. The Book of Job, also, the Psalms, Pro-

1) Luke iv. 16—21.

2) Rev. xix. 10.

verbs, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Songs ; and the prophecies from Jonah to Malachi are, with various degrees of light, resplendent with the mystery of Christ. So far as to the Old Testament ; the New speaks for itself. This very Epistle to the Colossians, what does it treat of but “Christ in” and among “the Gentiles the hope of glory ?” And as it was in this mystery that the Colossians especially needed to be established, the apostle may, therefore, have chosen to call the whole inspired volume, the *Word of Christ*.

But the Scriptures are the word of Christ because they are inspired by the Spirit of Christ. “The prophets,” we learn from St. Peter, “searched what manner of time the Spirit of Christ, which was in them, did signify when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow.”³ The people in the wilderness are said to have “tempted Christ.”⁴ The apostle calls Moses’ endurance of the afflictions of Egypt, “his preferring the reproach of Christ to all the treasures of Egypt.”⁵ “That rock was Christ,” saith St. Paul, speaking of the rock pouring out its streams for the refreshment of the multitude in the desert. St. Peter teaches us, also, that “Christ went by his Spirit in the prophets, and preached in the days of Noah.”⁶ Thus it was the Logos, the Eternal Word, the “Creator of all things visible and invisible ; the image of the invisible God ; in whom the fulness of the Godhead dwelt,” who inspired “the prophecies of old time ;” which “came, not by the will of men ; but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.”⁷ Accordingly, our Lord thus directs the Jews, “Search the Scriptures, for in them ye think ye have eternal life, and they are they that testify of me.”⁸ All this, again, has a bearing on the errors at Colosse which were seducing them from Christ.

The Scriptures are, further, the *Word of Christ*, because they terminate, in all their parts, in the manifestation of his

3) 1 Pet. i. 10, 11.

4) 1 Cor. x. 9.

5) Heb. xi. 26.

6) 1 Pet. iii. 19.

7) 2 Pet. i. 21.

8) John v. 29

glory. Christ is the burden and end of them. Take away Christ from the Bible, and you blot out the sun from the firmament. Take away Christ from the Bible, and you leave only a lifeless mass of precepts and ceremonies. The Holy Scriptures have their sum, and centre, and scope, from the beginning of Genesis to the end of the Revelations, in his glory. Not only have we in the Bible his personal preaching—not only the mystery of his redemption—not only the inspired dictates of the Holy Ghost as sent by him, but much more; Christ is the end of the whole volume, the golden thread to guide through the labyrinth, the pearl of unknown price which the evangelical merchantman having found, went and sold all that he had, and bought; the treasure hid in the field, which when a man had discovered, he went, and selling all that he had, purchased that field. Christ is the key of the arch; the corner-stone of the foundation; and the sun illuminating with his righteousness and salvation the whole system to its remotest limits. The design of the Almighty therein was to “give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.”⁹ The Colossians, therefore, must never listen for a moment to those who would draw them away from Christ, and substitute for his sole mediation that of angels and saints.

2. But we proceed to consider the manner in which the *Word of Christ* is to be studied.

Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom. These words imply a continual pondering upon it in our hearts; an adequate regard to all its instructions, and a just and careful use of it to its proper ends.

A continual pondering over it in our hearts. This is implied in the command, *Let the word of Christ dwell in you*—not be a stranger; not stand without; not be saluted at a distance; not be slightly known; but enter and dwell in your house as a favoured and intimate guest; dwell in your hearts as a master resides in his own abode, and regulates

and orders every thing there ; and be meditated and pondered over with diligence and ceaseless care as the object of holy and intimate curiosity and delight.

This pondering over the Word of God stands opposed to the reading of it in a hurried, perfunctory manner. It must be read with great attention and reverence, with entire calmness, and with prayer to God for his divine illumination. We must "meditate therein day and night." We must "lay it up in our hearts." We must "search," dig, explore, go to the bottom of the heavenly mine.

This pondering stands opposed, also, to the mere occasionally reading the Bible by fits and starts when curiosity is awakened, or a desire to settle some critical difficulty occurs. We must study the Scriptures steadily, systematically, and with time duly allotted for the duty. It must be one of the businesses of each day of our lives.

This pondering, again, stands opposed to a cold, reluctant, and formal study of the Scriptures from official calls of duty, and not from choice, pleasure, delight, joy. "As new-born babes, we are to desire the sincere milk of the word, that we may grow thereby."¹⁰ We are not to treat the Bible with coldness, but let it dwell within us and abide continually in our minds, by love and meditation ; it must be not less known or less familiar than those who are with us as "the men of our counsel" and "our own familiar friends." The apostle does not say, "Let the word of Christ be among you ; let it be praised ; let it be known ; let it be read ;" but, *let it dwell in you*. As the soul dwells in the body and vivifies it, so let the Word of Christ be the soul of your religion ; let it vivify, direct, govern all the actions of your life.*

But the word of Christ is to dwell in us *richly* ; this implies a regard to every part of its divine contents in its

* Daillé in loc.

¹⁰) 1 Pet. ii. 3.

full and adequate meaning and import. The word *richly* here means copiously, abundantly, in a full and adequate manner; the memory being stored with its instructions; the tongue furnished, the judgment formed, the conduct directed and governed.

We say of a river, that it flows rich and full, in opposition to a shallow stream. We say of a student thoroughly versed in classical lore, that he is a rich and ripe scholar. So of a philosopher, a physician, a statesman, a general; the experienced and mature minds of such persons we term rich and well-stored, in opposition to men without resources, and only partially masters of their profession.

In like manner, the Word of Christ is not only to dwell in us, and be pondered over with calmness, assiduity, and delight, but to dwell in us *richly* and abundantly, that is, in all its parts without omission; and with a thorough, experienced, and well practised habit of judgment, without haste and crudeness, and partial affection.

It must dwell in us richly in all its treasures, in all its promises, all its history, all its devotions, all its prophecies, all its evangelical narratives, all its apostolical epistles, all its precepts, all its threatenings, all its discoveries of a future world, all its spirit and bearings.

And this must be received by "senses exercised to discern good and evil,"¹¹ with repeated meditation; a comparison of one part with another; the use of all the aids of sound and cautious criticism; a regard to the manner in which God is pleased to convey truth; diligence in the employment of all means of instruction, as ministers, commentators, devout writers and divines, ancient and modern; consideration of difficulties again and again reflected on; the mind exercised and practised "in the word of righteousness;" first impressions and crude notions rejected; opinions sounded, examined, and resolved, before they are adopted. Thus the Word of Christ will dwell in us richly.

¹¹) Heb. v. 14.

But the apostle adds, *in all wisdom* ; which requires of us something more than pondering on Scripture and in all its parts ; it implies a just and careful use of it to its proper ends. For Satan can quote Scripture, if he be allowed to pervert it. Every heretic can cite the passages which appear to favour his cause. The Jewish and philosophizing teachers at Colosse, with their *enticing words*, would no doubt largely appeal to whatever the Scriptures said of angels and their ministrations, and of man and his weakness. Nor would they omit to urge the abstinences and privations of the Levitical law in favour of their own traditions.

Wisdom, therefore, is necessary to use the Word of Christ to its proper ends, on proper occasions, with application to the persons for whom it was designed, and in the spirit of the sacred writers. Wisdom puts the different parts of truth in Scripture together, proceeds with calmness and deliberation in deducing consequences, considers all circumstances, and adopts, as we have more than once observed, the best means for attaining the highest ends proposed by them.

The apostle had already prayed for the Colossians that they might be “filled with the knowledge of God’s will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding.” And he had declared that “in Christ were hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.” He adds the like caution here as peculiarly needful at Colosse amongst the Judaizing and philosophizing teachers.

It is for this reason, as well as others, that in all ages of the church a learned ministry is of the last importance, as we observed in a previous lecture—a body of persons, who, from early discipline of mind, sound study, knowledge of the original languages, and the retirement of years spent in pondering upon the Word of Christ, and in acquiring a rich knowledge of it, may be capable, with God’s grace and help, of instructing *wisely* the souls of men. For these are the means, under the influences of the Holy Spirit and the renewal of “the mind in knowledge after the image of God.”

of acquiring practical wisdom in the use and application of Holy Scripture. A raw, hasty, unfurnished, unsubdued mind, rudely dealing with the Word of Christ, and without adequate preparatory learning and knowledge, is almost sure to fall into some fundamental errors in the discharge of the ministry of that word amongst his flock ; as the false teachers at Colosse did ; and as we see to be the case in every age and all parts of the church.

3. Having considered the reason for which the inspired Scriptures may be termed the Word of Christ ; and the manner in which they are to be studied, it only remains for us to notice the complete refutation of the whole system of the Church of Rome in the suppression and prohibition of the blessed Bible, which our apostle's exhortation furnishes. For if this language of St. Paul does not imply, as a matter beyond all question, and not requiring even to be proved, the universal diffusion of the Holy Scriptures, and the freest opportunities of reading them, no language can. The duty of *letting the Word of Christ dwell in us richly in all wisdom* can never even be begun, if the books of Scripture themselves are not in our hands, or are locked up, as they are in the Church of Rome, in a foreign tongue, or are mixed with apocryphal and uninspired writings, as of equal authority, or are imposed on men with an erroneous translation of capital passages, or are to be interpreted by the multifarious and discordant comments of the fathers, or to be subjected without appeal to the contradictory decrees of councils, and the mere dictum of the Bishop of Rome.

The system of the great anti-christian apostacy is founded on an ignorance of Scripture. The Pope shuts the Bible, and then imposes all the idolatry of saint-worship, with its encumbered appendages, upon the consciences of a superstitious people.

The impious prohibition contained in the rules of the "Index," drawn up by the authority of the Council of Trent, and approved and published by Pope Pius IV. and all his

successors to the present hour, speaks for itself to every believer in the inspiration of the blessed Bible.

“It being clear, from experience,” says that document, “that if we permit, commonly and indifferently, the holy Bible in the vulgar tongue, more damage than benefit will arise, in consequence of the temerity of men.” Such is the beginning of the prohibition which “the man of sin, sitting in the temple of God,” ventures to fulminate. “As to such,” proceeds the Decree, “who without a license, (in writing from the bishop or the inquisition,) presume to read it, they cannot receive absolution of their sins without having first returned their Bible to the hands of the ordinary.”*

It has been observed on this horrible presumption, that the regulation should have run thus: “Experience having proved that the reading of the holy Bible is very prejudicial to the interests of the Pope, giving men the boldness to reject his authority and doctrine, which are not only not found in any part of the Word of God, but are contradictory to it in many instances; for this reason the Council think it right to restrain the knowledge of it, since to abolish it altogether would be impossible.”

I would earnestly recommend the consideration of the consequences of this fundamental part of the Romish system, to those in our own church who have been seduced to lean towards that apostacy. Surely no one can cordially subscribe to our Articles, or truly assent to our Homilies, or use our Liturgical services in sincerity, and yet look with longing towards Rome, and lament and revile the blessed Reformation, and sigh after a reunion with that “mother of harlots.”†

* Daillé.

† For a view of the artificial and wily system by which the Church of Rome, not only suppresses the holy Scriptures and weakens their force by the glosses of the Fathers, but actually supersedes the written Word of Christ altogether, by what is called the Theory of Development, see some extracts appended to this lecture from Dr. Hampden's most able and conclusive discourse on John xvii. 17—21, delivered before the Uni-

But we pass on to the second clause of the verse, of which we have considered at such length the first and all-important one.

Teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.

This would be one of the beneficial results of a rich and abundant knowledge of holy Scripture. A similar direction is given us in the parallel Epistle to the Ephesians, "Be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess, but be filled with the Spirit, speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your hearts to the Lord."¹²

Mutual instruction, therefore, enlivened with sacred verse, and accompanied with devout affections, will follow the *word of Christ dwelling in us richly in all wisdom.*

For all are to assist in helping on each other, in the heavenly way. Fathers are to teach their children; husbands and wives to admonish each other; the elders the young; the minister, above all, his flock. Well nourished with holy Scripture, this task would be natural and easy. "Exhort one another daily," says the apostle, "whilst it is called to-day, lest any be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin."¹³

This mutual instruction is to be enlivened with sacred verse, *with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs*, as contained in holy Scripture itself, or in devout odes founded upon it. A large part of the Bible is in poetry, and poetry the most sublime and affecting; and was so composed under the inspiration of that God who knows our frame, and would enlist every faculty and power in the cause of Christ. As music and poetry catch the ear, fix the attention, assist the mem-

versity of Oxford, in January, 1844, and which came into my hands as I was engaged in correcting this thirtieth lecture to send home to the printer, Dec. 16, 1844. It is entitled, "Christ sanctifying his Church."

12) Eph. v. 18-20.

13) Heb. iii. 13.

ory, and cause the instruction conveyed to sink deeper into the affections, especially of the young, Almighty God condescends to employ them. So our Lord went out to the Mount of Olives, not until he "had sung a hymn."¹⁴ So Paul and Silas "at midnight," and in a "prison," were "praying and singing praises to God."¹⁵ Job also teaches the afflicted to inquire, "Where is God my Maker, that giveth songs in the night?"¹⁶ and St. James observes, "Is any afflicted, let him pray, is any merry, let him sing psalms."¹⁷

The Book of Psalms contains a great variety of these different species of sacred verse. The distinction between the terms here employed is supposed by critics to be something like this; the psalm was any spiritual poem on whatever subject;—the hymn especially celebrated the praises of the Almighty;—the spiritual song or ode was more mixed in its matter and more artificial in its arrangements. So the 2nd psalm, the 45th, the 62nd, and 110th, are specimens of the first class; whilst the 18th, 104th, and 150th are examples of the hymns of praise; and the numerous psalms in general on the goodness, wisdom and power of God, on the events in the history of Israel, and on the wonders of Egypt, need not to be pointed out as specimens of the longer ode.*

It is probable, also, that some reference may be made, in the various terms we are considering, to the odes and hymns produced under the extraordinary gifts of the Spirit.

Here we may just stop to observe that the large portion of our public worship which has from the earliest ages been composed of the recitation of the psalms of David, and of the hymns and odes found in other parts of Scripture, together with the singing of similar psalms and hymns, though not inspired, probably derived their origin from these words of the apostle. Nor is any thing more consoling and edifying for Christians when in trouble, in imprisonment, in banish-

* Calv. and Daillé in loc.

14) Matt. xxvi. 30.

15) Acts xvi. 25.

16) Job xxv. 10.

17) James v. 13.

ment, and in the hours of sickness, and the approach of death, than the singing psalms and hymns to their Saviour and their God. Singing, also, in family and social prayer is an important branch of that duty. Nor can the labourer at his work, or the traveller on his journey, or the young in their walks and recreations, do better than animate each other with the recitation of spiritual songs.

The opposition which the apostle, in the passage to the Ephesians, parallel to the one we are considering, places between the being "drunk with wine wherein is excess," and the "speaking in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs," leads us to notice that the command seems to have a reference to the heathen worshippers feigning themselves to be inspired by Cybele and Bacchus, and running through the streets and fields during their festivals, in a frantic manner, singing impure songs to the honour of their gods.* The apostle, therefore, calls on the Colossians to let *the word of Christ dwell in them so richly*, that in their social and family meetings, when they were inclined to sing, they might speak to themselves in the sacred songs of holy Scripture. Those who were able to repeat these portions, or had new and similar odes dictated to them by the Spirit, should recite them to those who could not read, or had not copies of the Scriptures themselves. By hearing these rehearsed and sung, and by joining in them, both their knowledge and joy would be promoted.

But all this must be done with devout affections—*singing with grace in your hearts unto the Lord*, the Lord Christ, and not to angels nor saints; and under the influence of the grace of the Holy Spirit.

Lamentable is it to reflect how the arts of music and poetry are in our days abused to Satan's worst purposes, even amongst Christians. Grievous is it to consider the profane and impure poems and songs—and the graceless

* Macknight in loc.

hearts and voices which accompany them. This is one argument, amongst a thousand, against that association of Christians with the ungodly in their worldly amusements, stage-plays and other vanities, in which too many, alas, of whom we should have hoped better things, indulge!

And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks unto God and the Father by him.

This is a farther result of the word of Christ dwelling richly in the Colossians; they would not only be furnished with matter for sacred psalms, but would be guided to do every thing in the name and directed to the glory of the Lord Jesus. The apostle was now about to speak briefly of the particular relative duties of Christian families; but as it would be too long a task to go through them minutely, he teaches us first summarily that we are to *do every thing in word and deed in the name of the Lord Jesus*, that is, in obedience to his commands; relying on his grace; directed to his glory; and seeking acceptance through his merits.

This is to extend to whatever *we do in word or deed*—all our employments, conversation, public acts of adoration in social worship, in secular and domestic concerns, in every thing relating to the place of our abode, removal to other residences, engagements in life, and the connexions we form for ourselves and our children.

Every thing is to be done in the name and to the honour of Christ. The apostle gives as a specimen one of the highest acts of religious worship, *giving thanks unto God and the Father by him*; as he is our only Mediator, and it is through him we obtain whatever good God bestows upon us. And if this highest duty, then all subordinate ones must be done in the same manner.

You cannot fail to have observed, brethren, how immediately the exhortation of these two verses goes to confirm all the apostle's argument. It is probable he calls the holy Scriptures *the Word of Christ*, as we have said, in order to

lead the Colossians to think in the most exalted manner of him—to consider his word the only rule of faith—and not human traditions—to account all inventions of angel-worship as condemned at once, because not commanded in his word. To undertake whatever they did in word and deed, not in the name of angels, not of saints, not of human teachers, but of the Lord Jesus. And as the most effectual means of stopping incipient errors, and restoring truth on these points, to let *this Word of Christ dwell in them richly in all wisdom.*

NOTE.—Extracts from Dr. Hampden's sermon, referred to, page 324 :

“ Before such a living organ of Christ,” (as the church,) “ the Scriptures necessarily sink in value and importance to the Christian soul. They are nothing more than the teaching of the church at the time when they were written ; containing, indeed, the substance of the truth, and that explicit form of it in which a subsequent age of the church has unfolded it, and stated it. Consequently, to take them as they stand in their original form, is, according to this view, to overlook the successive expansions or limitations of their meaning which they have since obtained. It is to mistake hints and outlines for a finished structure ; statements, sufficient for the needs of the church at the time when they were put forth, as if they were adequate for the purpose of a later age : whereas successive occasions have called upon the church to pronounce more definitely than the Scriptures have done on many points of doctrine ; and by these accordingly the Scriptures must be interpreted, and not these by the Scriptures. Thus does what, in modern phraseology, is termed the theory of developments, very naturally obtain a place in the Romanist theory of the church ; and that theory of the church alone gives a warrant to it.”—(Page 14, 15.)

“ This theory of developments is virtually the same as that of an authoritative tradition of doctrines and interpretations. But it carries the theory of tradition a step further : for a tradition of truths might be supposed to continue the same, and to admit of no alteration or improvement even in the form of statement. As, however, the formal statements of doctrine have varied in successive ages, an explanation of this fact is needed to reconcile the apparent anomaly in a church, such as that of Rome, incapable of changing the doctrine of Christ, according to its own profession of being the authoritative organ of Christ himself. The difficulty, then, is met by regarding the Christian faith as a deposit in the

minds of the apostles and their successors—a nucleus of divine truth to be acted on by the reason ; and gradually unfolded in propositions, and reasonings, and conclusions : all so many explicit statements, that is, of what before was implicitly held ; however multiplied, yet no addition in substance to the original truth out of which they are evolved ; forms of doctrine, admitting of infinite diversification, yet one and the same in the truths delineated ; however new in the manner of expression, yet having nothing new in the doctrine itself so expressed. The theory of developments thus serves the same office in regard to the general theory of tradition, which tradition serves in regard to the Scriptures. As tradition is used by the Romanist to interpret the Scriptures in his own sense, so is the theory of developments employed for the interpretation of the testimony of tradition. For example : when it is objected that the doctrine of transubstantiation was not known in the church for several centuries,—that there is no such tradition ; it is granted, that the formal statement of transubstantiation had not been made before such a time ; that the doctrine itself, however, so stated, had always existed, but waited its development, in that explicit form, until the occasions of the church required such a statement of the doctrine of the Eucharist, as might secure the belief in the substantial reality of the Incarnation of Christ. In fact, there is no novelty of doctrine which may not be recommended on this ground as an explanation, that is, or development of some previous undoubted truth, in accordance with the rule of Vincent, *cum dicas novè non dicas nova.*—(Page 15, 16, 17.)

“ Here, accordingly, lies the great difference in the teaching of the Church of Rome, and our own church. The Church of Rome asserts, that the several forms of doctrine, by which the faith is expressed, are its own spontaneous effusions—decisions and declarations of the truth, possessing a divine sanction, as proceeding from itself, because it has the mind of Christ in forming it, and the voice of Christ speaking in it. The evidence of Scripture, accordingly, is not essential to the proofs of its doctrines. It is enough that they are referred to the authority of the church. They are the doctrines of Christ, because they are the doctrines of the church. The Church of England, on the other hand, disclaims any right to originate articles of faith of its own motion, or any authority to command what shall be believed by the faithful. It only proposes for the acceptance of its members, what itself believes to be the doctrine of Christ, in the way of authoritative counsel and direction to them ; and bids them search the Scriptures whether its teaching be true or no.—(Page 21, 22.)

“ We might not have been disposed to take the warning which the long experience of the world has given in the case of the Church of

Rome ; because it might have been supposed that the principle " (of development) " could be inculcated under the shade of a reformed church, apart from its obnoxious accompaniments in the former instance ; the corruptions of faith and practice which have followed in the Church of Rome. But we have now seen that these corruptions are its natural and proper results ; that we cannot take up an extravagant, unscriptural theory of the church, without taking along with it its unscriptural consequences ; that, if we become Romanists in principle, we must be Romanists throughout ; believers in the doctrine of the mass, and of purgatory, and of invocation of saints and angels, of justification by the sacraments, of the merit of good works, and other corruptions of the Church of Rome ; and that we must also become assimilated to it in conduct, having words of peace and gentleness on our lips, and persecution in our hearts. The developments of the last few years have strikingly brought this fact before us."—(Page 27, 28.)

LECTURE XXXI.

DOMESTIC DUTIES.

COL. iii. 18—25; iv. I.

CHRISTIANITY is a perfect system ; nothing is wanting either as to doctrine or morals. Our apostle, therefore, is not content with stripping the old man of his heathen vices, and adorning the new with the contrary graces and virtues. Nor does he stop in directing the Colossians to " let the Word of Christ dwell in them richly," so that they might " do all things in the name of the Lord Jesus." But he goes on to give some particular rules for the new man in his conduct in domestic life. In doing this, he takes the three classes of persons which divide the private circle, and amongst whom the closest mutual obligations exist. Husbands and wives, parents and children, masters and servants. This constitutes the fourth portion of the means of our rising more and more with Christ.

The glory of Christianity, as to its morals, consists in the purity and happiness of its domestic life ; as the misery and confusion of heathenism and Mahommedanism arise from the loss of the original law of marriage. All is slavery, pollution, jealousy, divorce, uncertainty as to the descent of property, contests in royal houses, murder of rivals, neglect of children, disobedience, distraction, envy, and hatred, where polygamy prevails. But where Christianity rules, all is peace, love, purity, steadfast affection, religious education of children, safe transmission of property, contentment, repose, union.

Such is the effect of the pure doctrine of the Gospel as believed by our apostle. How lovely, how beneficent is Christianity ! Were she diffused over the world in her true character, how unspeakable would be the blessing, temporal as well as eternal ! With this code of family morals expounding the ten commandments, which we are about to consider, who could avoid acknowledging the beauty of the Gospel ? This is the fruit of the tree of life. Whereas any material corruption of the doctrine of Christ, deprives the morals which flow from it, of their force.

What have the merits of works, and philosophy, and the worship of angels, ever done to sanctify men ? What traditions and human commandments, in things "which perish with the using," to purify the heart ? What has a mean, degrading superstitious religion ever done in honouring and promoting the institution of marriage, the religious education of children, and the due relations of masters and servants ?

Alas, we have seen for many centuries how Rome sapped the foundation of Christian morals by discouraging God's institution of holy matrimony, by imposing celibacy on the priesthood, by magnifying the merit of virginity, by representing the married state as inconsistent with high attainments in holiness, and instituting a multitude of monasteries and nunneries ; and yet at the same time exalting matrimony, without a shadow of scriptural authority, into a sacrament

of like dignity with the divinely instituted ones of baptism and the Supper of the Lord.

Such are the fruits of human inventions in religion ; and it is one of the broadest features of their tendency towards popery in the divines whose errors have still left some roots in the earth around us, that they imitate that corrupt church, as in every other, so in this instance also.

It is to be observed that the apostle in the subsequent directions begins with the inferior relation in each class—the wife, the child, the servant ; because the difficulty of obedience is greater ; because in contentions it is the duty of the humbler party to submit, and also because the discharge of duty by that party is the surest method of securing it in the other.

It is to be noted, also, that in all the three divisions of persons, the highest motives of the Gospel are intimately connected with the right performance of their mutual duties. The wife is to aim to “win over the husband to Christ,” if an unbeliever, “without the word, by her chaste conversation.”¹ The husband is to “love the wife, as Christ loved the church,” and to walk with her in the ways of piety, “as being heirs of the grace of life,” that their “prayers be not hindered.” The parent is to bring up the child “in the nurture and admonition of the Lord ;”² and the child to “obey his parent, as it is fit in the Lord.” The master is to remember “he has a Master in heaven ;” and the servant or slave is to “adorn the doctrine of God his Saviour in all things.”³ Thus evangelical doctrine leads to, and terminates in, relative duties, as its natural and proper fruit.

It is further to be remembered that the apostles, in three or four places, repeat the self-same directions and cautions as in the verses before us, with the like encouragements to the three classes—a proof of the importance they attached to domestic Christian morals, and of the danger the converts were in of being turned aside by false teachers, and stopping

1) 1 Pet. iii. 1.

2) Eph. v. 25 ; vi. 4.

3) Tit. ii. 10.

short in knowledge and approbation of duty, without carrying it out into practice.

1. We begin with husbands and wives, the first class of persons united in domestic life.

18. *Wives, submit yourselves to your own husbands, as it is fit in the Lord.*

19. *Husbands, love your wives, and be not bitter against them.*

The wife is to submit herself to her own husband as it is fit in the Lord ; because the law of God from the beginning, as well as the frame of body and mind of the two sexes, enjoined that due submission, without which there can be no domestic order and happiness.

No exceptions are made. The terms, *As it is fit in the Lord*, suggest, indeed, the only exception, where the husband's wishes contravene the clear will of God.

The apostle, in the parallel passage in the Ephesians, adds an expression of this motive, "As the church is subject to Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing." And St. Peter gives the further hope that husbands, that "obey not the word," may also, "without the word, be won by the chaste conversation of the wives coupled with fear."⁵

The correspondent duty of the husbands is expressed, not by the correlative word, command, but by the softer and gentler one, love ; *husbands, love your wives* ; to which, in the Ephesians, our apostle adds, "as Christ also loved the church ;" or, in other words, "their own bodies, for no man ever yet hated his own flesh, but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church."⁶

A caution is added against the fault which even the gentle authority allotted to the husband may produce upon his rougher nature, or when irritations and afflictions occur. *Be not bitter against them* ; sharp, ill-tempered, difficult to

4) Eph. v. 24.

5) 1 Pet. iii. 1—3.

6) Eph. v. 25, 28, 29.

please—do not vent upon them the bitterness excited in your mind abroad in the world by others.

The apostle Peter adds, “giving honour to the wife as unto the weaker vessel.”⁷ The consideration of the slight inferiority which God had ordained, and of the comparative weakness of their sex, together with their manifold sufferings and anxieties as connected with the bearing and bringing up of children, should induce their husbands to give them the higher honour; to treat them with the greatest respect; to take much satisfaction in their company; to honour them before servants and strangers; to support their credit in the family; to make a becoming provision for their wants; to lay no unreasonable injunctions upon them, and to show a great concern in every thing relating to their health, comfort, and reputation.*

How wise and reasonable are these rules! If the apostle had placed the husband and wife exactly on the same footing, how perpetually would contests for superiority have arisen! Now all is settled. The wife is on a little, and only a little, lower level; for she is still the companion, the friend, the solace of the man, the mother of his family, the ornament of the domestic circle.

Or had the apostle placed the matter of authority on the footing of age, influence, talents, education, beauty, health, fortune,—how constantly would disputes have been generated! But now that it stands simply and universally on the command of God, all is harmony and peace.

And nothing can more clearly illustrate the wisdom of the divine rule, than the misery, wretchedness, and often ruin, temporal and eternal, which follow from the assumption, on the part of the wife, of an authority which God has prohibited, and from the consequent jealousies and contentions which it always engenders.

* Scott in loc.

The intimation that they are "heirs of the grace of life," and that "their prayers may be hindered" by disagreements, teaches us that in the first steps taken towards the choice of partners in this sacred relation, a regard should be primarily had to the religious character of the individual. The husband and wife cannot walk together "as heirs of the grace of life," unless they are each of them first heirs of it themselves.

The "hinderer of prayer," also, suggests that it is the duty of married persons, besides their individual devotions, to pray frequently and habitually with each other.

We may observe that, in order to assist in the discharge of these mutual duties, common maxims of prudence may be adverted to. For instance, it has been well observed, that each party should continue the same attention, courtesy, and desire to please after marriage as before; should remember that both are imperfect beings, and that what each was before their union, that they will substantially be after; that they should not think the neglect of duty, or the supposed neglect, in one party, warrants neglect in the other; but should watch their tempers as the caution against *bitterness* suggests; should consult the honour of each other in the family and in society,—the wife upholding the husband's dignity in his public duties; the husband, the wife's in her more private ones—should never have any concealment as to money, debts, and expenditure—never have any interests, projects, wishes, unknown to the other; and should guard against the first approach of any acquaintances or familiarities which may give the least suspicion of unfaithfulness to the other party—knowing "how great a matter a little fire kindleth."

2. We come to the second class, parents and children.

20. *Children, obey your parents in all things; for this is well pleasing unto the Lord.*

21. *Fathers, provoke not your children to anger, lest they be discouraged.*

Similar is the direction in the corresponding Epistle, Eph. vi. 1, "Children, obey your parents in the Lord; for this is right. Honour thy father and mother, which is the first commandment" (of the second table) "with promise;" verse 3, "That it may be well with thee, and that thou mayest live long on the earth;" verse 4, "And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath; but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord."

The duty here is universal obedience on the part of children, limited only by the expression, "In the Lord;" so that if heathen or depraved parents should enjoin what was contradictory to the commands of Christ, they might not be obeyed. Children are not, however, to refuse perverse, unreasonable, hard, or troublesome commands; much less what may cross their humours in indifferent things; for this would set them up as judges over their parents. The single exempt case is what I have noted.

The apostle adds, as a further argument, "This is right;" it is according to the law of nature; it is equitable and reasonable, a debt due to the instruments of their existence; generally conducive to their welfare; made necessary by the weakness of infancy and childhood; and is the foundation, indeed, of all domestic duties.

The command is enlarged by the apostle by the citation from the fifth commandment, which requires "honour" on the part of children, and extends it specifically to each parent; for honour includes respect, regard to authority, desire to please, assistance in difficulty, maintenance where the case requires it; every thing that can betoken the sense of obligations which nothing can repay.

The promise which is cited encourages still further the obedient child—this promise was no doubt more commonly visible under the system of the temporal rewards and punishments of the Old Testament; still it is even now generally found that the discharge of the duties to parents brings

with it various temporal as well as spiritual blessings in the order of divine providence.

The correlative duty of parents is to "bring up their children," like Timothy, "in the nurture and admonition of the Lord;" teaching them early the holy Scriptures, praying for them and with them, accustoming them to the observance of the Sabbath and attendance on public worship, instructing them in the duty of constant prayer to God for his sanctifying grace, checking the first outbreaks of open sin, keeping them from bad companions and scenes of temptation; and, for all these ends, laying a foundation early in their minds of implicit and cheerful obedience; and supporting their authority by a holy and consistent example.

The apostle takes for granted their bringing them to holy baptism, as the infants of the Jews were brought to circumcision; otherwise he would have enjoined that duty, when they were arrived at mature years and could fulfil the conditions of repentance and faith in their own persons. His silence confirms all the other grounds for infant baptism adduced in a former lecture.

The caution against *provoking them to wrath*, with the reason, *lest they be discouraged*, is of the last moment. Fathers are especially admonished by name as to this, both in this Epistle and that to the Ephesians. For the softer nature of the mother rather leads her to the contrary evil of indulgence. But the father is more in danger, from his stronger character of mind and body, of irritating children by harshness; provoking their young passions by unjust and unreasonable injunctions; and acting by mere authority more than by persuasion and mild direction. If the father is continually finding fault, and confounding the distinction between wilful offences and heedlessness; between immoralities, and displeasure to the parent's humours; between obstinate disobedience, and the inadvertencies of youth, "children are discouraged;" they are hardened in their

faults, they despair of pleasing their parents, they seek companions and associations away from home, they dread the company of their father especially; and often fall into ruinous temptations.

An ingenuous and liberal education, not a harsh and tyrannical treatment, is that which all experience teaches to be alone successful. Children are to be led, not driven; to be treated as reasonable creatures, not forced as brute animals; to have the grounds of any extraordinary commands placed before them; to be commended for what is good; and to have their defective endeavours to obey kindly interpreted. Then they will not be *provoked to anger, nor discouraged*.

This must all be based, however, on the authority of the parents being first well laid in their earliest age; and no arguing and disputing being allowed, when a command is once given, on the child's part. The language of the Psalmist suggests the rule and the limit; "Like as a father pitieth his own children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him."⁸ Thus let us pity our children; and be careful to imitate, also, the holiness and authority, which is never remitted for an instant in the case of our heavenly Father, and never should be in ours.

3. The third and most numerous class of mankind, as united in families, is treated by our apostle at greater length, as exposed to the most trying series of duties, especially at a period when servants were slaves, the property of their masters, bought and sold with their estates, and under the power of their owners even as to life and death; uneducated, unprotected, and generally unpitied.*

22. *Servants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh, not with eye-service as men-pleasers, but in singleness of heart, fearing God.*

* There are supposed to have been sixty millions of slaves in the Roman empire.

The command is again couched in universal terms ; the exceptions being understood, as in the former cases. The words, however, *according to the flesh*, suggest a strong consolation to them, arising from the spiritual liberty of their Christian character, which nothing could impair. Their subjection to their masters was God's appointment ; a merely temporary and external relation according to the flesh, and not extending to the mind or spirit.

The apostle adds, in the parallel direction, "with fear and trembling ;" and St. Peter, "with all fear, not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward ;" for a meek, respectful carriage even to the most perverse masters, was required of the Christian converts, and was the way to honour the Gospel, and disarm their master's displeasure.

The apostle adds, *In singleness of heart, fearing God*. "With good will doing service, as to the Lord and not unto men." These directions mark the motive and source of this respectful tenor of conduct, a single desire and aim to glorify Christ, a fear of God as evidenced by it ; a good-will and cheerfulness in obeying their masters, as thereby "serving the Lord and not men." Such are the deep-struck roots of obedience. Cautions against the most prevalent faults of the character of the slaves, which are, alas, too often those of nominally Christian servants also, are given, *not with eye-service as men pleasers*—to which are added by our apostle, in his Epistles to Titus and Timothy ; "not answering again ;" "not purloining, but shewing all good fidelity ;"⁹ "not despising their believing masters" when blessed with such, "because they are brethren," nor following the "questions and strifes of words" of those who would teach them otherwise.¹⁰

If the deepest student of Christian morals were to endeavour to point out the especial dangers to which servants are exposed, he could mention none so prominent as those named by our inspired apostle. The experience of all ages

9) Tit. ii. 9, 10.

10) 1 Tim. vi. 1-3.

agrees upon these matters. *Eye-servants*, who watch the absence of their master for indolence or negligence ; pert and froward servants, who answer disrespectfully when rebuked ; dishonest servants, who, instead of guarding their master's house, food, provisions, stores, gardens, furniture, property, "with all good fidelity," "purloin" and give away to their companions whatever they can ; ill-instructed religious servants, who take liberties with their masters, if they are pious and devout persons ; lastly, hypocritical and disputatious servants, who abuse the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and dote about abstruse questions, which they cannot understand, and which do not concern their practical duties ; these are allowed by all to be the most unprofitable and disgraceful to the Gospel they profess, of all kinds of persons in stations of dependence.

The apostle seems never to satisfy himself on the topics of encouragement he adduces to this neglected and numerous body ; he says,

23. *And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men ;*

24. *Knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance, for ye serve the Lord Christ.*

What a glorious recompense of reward is here promised ! Let them perform their duties with all their hearts, as serving, in fact, not their earthly masters, but the Lord Christ ; let them be assured that their obedience will honour Christ, and be acceptable to him ; let them give Christ the chief place in their service ; let them be persuaded that the free and most gracious reward, not of merit, but of inheritance,—a free gift, the fruit of adoption into God's family, will await them. What encouragements are here !

25. *But he that doeth wrong, shall receive for the wrong which he hath done : and there is no respect of persons.*

This implies that grievous wrongs were commonly in-

flicted on the poor helpless slaves. It implies, also, that the Christian convert was still to persevere in his obedience ; in his “fear and trembling ;” in his “singleness of heart ;” in “his good-will,” and cheerfulness of submission ; in his avoiding the sins to which his position principally exposed him ; in doing every thing with all his heart and soul, “as unto the Lord and not to men ;” and in looking for the blessed inheritance of heaven ; and that in thus acting, he would have the consolation to remember, that as to the injustice done him, there was a day coming when *whoever did wrong*, however high his authority for this brief moment of life, *would receive for the wrong which he did* from that Almighty Lord and Judge of all, with whom there was *no respect of persons*. Before that impartial tribunal, the misconduct of the poor slave would not excuse the cruelty and injustice of the master ; nor the idolatry, wickedness, and cruelty of the master exempt the slothful, dishonest, and disobedient slave from punishment ; but “every one would be judged according to his works.”

Ch. iv. 1. *Masters, give unto your servants that which is just and equal : knowing that ye also have a Master in heaven.*

Or, as in the parallel Epistle, “And ye, masters, do the same things unto them, forbearing threatening ; knowing that your Master, also, is in heaven ; neither is there respect of persons with him.”

How admirable these injunctions, founded on the authority, dominion, and commands of the glorious and sovereign Lord of all ! How precisely adapted to the dangers to which masters are most exposed in the performance of their duties to their inferiors ! They are to give to their servants or slaves “that which is just and equal ;” that measure of support and recompense for their labours which their contract with them or the natural laws of God required ; that care of them in sickness ; that provision in old age ; that proportionate reward for extraordinary fidelity and exertions ;

in a word, all that considerate, reasonable, and affectionate attention, which they, in like circumstances, would wish their servants to render to them; “forbearing threatening,” and remembering that *they also had a Master in heaven*; and exercising, therefore, their authority with humanity and gentleness, not only without inflicting rigorous punishments, as it was too common for masters to do, but also forbearing to menace and terrify their servants, or to express any haughty or excessive anger at them even when faulty. For though the law of man might give them great power, yet they were accountable to the great Lord and Master of all for their use of it; who would deal with men according to their conduct to their inferiors, as well as others; and who expects his people to copy the example of his own divine mercy and lenity.

The wisdom of the inspired apostle in these directions is most observable. He enters not abstractedly upon the subject of slavery in the existing state of the world; but requires implicit obedience from the servants to their masters; enjoining, at the same time, on the masters equity and mildness, and not the absolute manumission of their slaves. The apostle left it to the gradual influence of Christianity to produce that change in the judgment of individuals, of families, neighbourhoods, and nations, which would lead to the abolition of that monstrous evil. It was by working in this unobtrusive way,—in making good husbands, good wives, good children, good servants, good magistrates, good rulers, good sovereigns,—that Christianity was to produce its stupendous effects. Had the Gospel proclaimed open war with slavery as slavery, the outcry against it on the part of the governments of the earth would have been infinitely greater than it was, and rebellion amongst the slaves have been probably excited.

It is the same as to forms of civil government. Christianity is the religion of peace; enjoins loyalty to the powers that be; forbids all rebellion, sedition, and unlawful resist-

ance to authority ; and is content gradually to improve kings and governments by the progress of individual piety and truth—which it has been insensibly but surely doing from the time of its promulgation.

How beneficial, then, is the holy religion of Christ ! Add these relative duties to the tempers and graces before enjoined on the new man, verses 10—15 ; and both to the mortification of every vice which the apostle had previously required, verses 5—9 ; and you have the most undeniable internal proofs of the excellency of the true religion. And when, in connexion with these morals, the redemption of Christ is considered ; his incarnation, his atonement, his mediation, the work of the Holy Spirit ; the promises, the hopes, the joys of faith, and the anticipations of a future state of glory, you have a system as full of God as it is adapted to all the necessities of man ; as complete as it is simple and glorious ; and which is only marred by the clumsy inventions of men, intermeddling with its doctrine or rules of duty.

LECTURE XXXII.

PERSEVERANCE IN PRAYER—SPIRITUAL WISDOM—CHRISTIAN CONVERSATION.

Col. iv. 2—6.

2. Continue in prayer, and watch unto the same with thanksgiving.

THE third main division of our apostle's discourse is closed. We enter now on the fourth and last, containing his conclusion of the whole Epistle. This consists of two parts, an exhortation to some special spiritual duties, and his usual salutations.

Having briefly, but most pointedly, enforced the several offices of domestic life, our apostle, in concluding his Epistle, returns, in the verses we are about to consider, to some spiritual duties, general and particular, which he intermingles with references to the great mystery of Christ.

1. These duties either relate to the temper of the Colossians' minds, and their intercessions with God for him and the progress of the Gospel; and may be classed under the head of prayer, verses 2—4; 2, or else to their conversation with their brethren in the midst of the impending dangers, against which it was the great object of his Epistle to warn them; and may be arranged under the head of wisdom.

In the first of these verses, that relating to prayer, we shall have to notice the perseverance, the watchfulness, and the thanksgiving, which St. Paul enforces with respect to it. Perseverance in prayer is first enjoined; for there is no duty so important and none so difficult. To pray in some way or other is easy; is essential, indeed, to any the least degree of divine life in the soul; but to continue and go on from day to day, under discouragements, under delays, under dark and gloomy events in providence; to persevere, under all circumstances, in humble, fervent, unremitted supplications, to come to God in prayer as beggars imploring alms, as sinners imploring pardon, as children imploring a father's pity and help—this is difficult indeed. Nothing so arduous as to bring God and a man's soul together, except that of keeping them together.

Especially in the distracted state of the Colossians, with the divisions beginning to appear, with the Jewish and philosophizing teachers insinuating and imposing their errors about angel-mediation and human traditions, was it no easy thing to *continue in prayer*.

Our Lord, in "speaking a parable to this end, that men should always pray and not faint;"¹ and encouraging us to

1) Luke xviii. 1.

importunity by the success of the poor widow with the unjust and godless judge, points out both our danger and remedy. Importunate prayer is the way to every blessing. It honours God, acknowledges our dependence upon him, keeps us humble, fearful, and spiritual; separates us from a worldly, low habit of mind; weans us from sin, unites all the workmen together in God's building, animates us to the most active use of means, and enables us to wait in patience God's time of deliverance.

The exhortation has a reference probably to the domestic duties the apostle had been enforcing in the preceding verses. These could never be properly performed without constant supplies of grace, which could only be expected to flow into their souls by the constantly widening channels of prayer. Continuance in this holy exercise would bring in God to their aid, however arduous the duties they had to perform.

The direction also seems to intimate that those who live in families should often join in social prayer for God's grace and assistance to strengthen them in carrying out the whole system of morals into the domestic circle, to pardon their numerous daily defects one towards another; and to draw closer those bands of love, forbearance, and active benevolence, which make "men of one mind in a house."

Indeed, the command may have a bearing in the apostle's mind on all the topics of his Epistle. Let them only continue in heartfelt prayer to the one God and Father of all, through the one only Mediator and Redeemer, according to the glorious truths he had been opening to them, and avoiding the idolatrous and slavish impositions of the false teachers which he had condemned, and all would be well. God in his good time, after he had exercised their faith and patience, would help and deliver them, vindicate his injured truth, and restore the purity and peace of the church.

In like manner, with regard to ourselves, dear brethren, in India, and throughout our Protestant Church, let us *continue in prayer*; and God will disperse the clouds of èr-

roneous doctrine in his good time, and exalt and bless our humble and united efforts for his glory.

But the apostle adds watchfulness to perseverance in prayer. *Watch thereunto* ; as a sentinel suspecting the approach of an enemy ; as a watchman guarding the city during the darkness of the night ; as a physician attending all the symptoms of a disease ; as a keeper of a prison watching an insidious and treacherous criminal. Our hearts need all this care ; spiritual enemies are near ; the darkness of the soul exposes it to danger ; the disease of sin requires a watchful treatment ; and the unparalleled deceitfulness of the affections can never safely be trusted for a moment.

No ; we must watch before prayer in order to dismiss the world from our thoughts, to gather up our minds in God, and to implore the Holy Spirit's help. We must watch during prayer ; to guard against distraction, against the incursions of evil thoughts, against wanderings of mind, and decay of fervour in our supplications. We must watch after prayer, in order that we may act consistently with what we have been imploring of Almighty God, wait his time for answering us, and not lose the visitations of grace ; for with God are the moments of life, of mercy, of enlargement, and of gracious consolation.*

Thanksgiving closes the duties accompanying prayer. For such is our hardness of heart, that we are ready enough to complain, to fret, to murmur ; but too frequently backward to thanksgiving. We forget that we merit our chastisements ; but do not merit the removal of them, nor the support under them, nor the various alleviations mingled with them. Sinners such as we, are, therefore, never without abundant causes of thanksgiving, whilst we have our God and Father, our Saviour and Redeemer, our Comforter and Sanctifier ; whilst we have the Bible and the promises, the Sabbaths and the sacraments, and access to God in prayer ;

[* Quesnel in loc.

whilst we call to mind how we were graciously “translated from the power of darkness into the kingdom of God’s dear Son,” and how we have been borne with, and carried on, and delivered from time to time since. Gratitude opens the hand of God to give, and the heart of the suppliant to receive aright. To be thankful for past blessings and for present benefits and comforts, is the way to obtain fresh ones.

3. *Withal praying also for us, that God would open unto us a door of utterance to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am also in bonds.*

4. *That I may make it manifest as I ought to speak.*

Thus the greatest of the messengers of Christ, the bold and intrepid “apostle of the Gentiles,” implores the intercessions of his humble converts at Colosse, and seems conscious of the difficulty of making manifest the unspeakably glorious mystery of the Gospel in the manner he desired. How earnest his entreaties to them; how sensible of his need; how oppressed his mind appears with the immense weight of the mystery of Christ!

Thus he speaks in other epistles also. The parallel language in that to the Ephesians closely resembles that now before us. “Praying”—“for me, that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the Gospel, for which I am an ambassador in bonds: that therein I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak.”²

And so to the Romans, “Now I beseech you, brethren, for the Lord Jesus Christ’s sake, and for the love of the Spirit, that ye strive together with me in your prayers to God for me.”³ And to the Philippians, “For I know that this shall turn to my salvation through your prayers, and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ.”⁴ And to the Thessalonians, “Finally, brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may have free course and be glorified, even as it is

2) Eph. vi. 18—20.

3) Rom. xv. 30.

4) Phil i. 19.

with you ; and that we may be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men.’⁵

It is well observed by Dr. Whitby, that this apostle, who thus passionately writes to the Christian converts desiring their prayers to God for him, never once intimates the duty or possibility of prayers being addressed to the dead. He never makes any such prayers himself, nor directs others to do so. He never once prays to the Virgin, or angels, or departed saints. This is an evidence that he approved not of such prayers. And the argument is the stronger, because the omission is found in this very Epistle before us, where he had been condemning with such a fearful denunciation, the worship of angels, and where the proper limitations of the invocation of them, if lawful at all, would assuredly have been found. To argue with the Papists, that because St. Paul entreated the Colossians to intercede for him, we may pray to saints departed, is just as absurd as to say that because St. Paul wrote this Epistle to the Colossians, he might have written, and we might write letters to the dead.* These Colossians were living when St. Paul addressed them ; he had constant intercourse with them ; he wrote to them, and they answered ; he knew that his words would reach them, and he expected theirs in return. He therefore commends himself to their prayers as brethren with whom he had, by the providence of God, mutual communication and bonds of duty. But of course all this communication, as well as every duty of social life, was broken off at death.

There are three points to be noticed in the verses before us : the mystery of the Gospel ; the door of utterance in connexion with it ; and the full proclamation of the word of God which the apostle wished to make.

The mystery of Christ is a summary of all the doctrine of the Epistle, and indeed of the whole Bible. It contains the mystery of Christ incarnate ; Christ dying upon the

* Daillé in loc.

5) 2 Thess. iii. 1, 2.

cross ; Christ preached to the Gentiles ; Christ inhabiting the heart of his faithful people.

Christ incarnate is a mystery. "Great is the mystery of godliness, God was manifest in the flesh." For "the Word was made flesh, and dwelt amongst us ;"⁶ that Word which was "in the beginning with God and was God ;" that Word who is "the image of the invisible God, by whom were all things created visible and invisible." This is a mystery, indeed, a secret of which man could have no information but by revelation, and which, when revealed as to the fact, remains an incomprehensible mystery as to the mode and details of its existence.

For what is so inconceivable as God made man ; the Almighty Creator, a creature ; the eternal God, an infant of days ; he who "was in the form of God and thought it not robbery to be equal with God, making himself of no reputation, and taking upon him the form of a servant, and being made in the likeness of men !"⁷

Christ dying a sacrifice upon the cross is a further step in this prodigious mystery ; that the eternal Son of God should have made "peace through the blood of his cross ;" that he should have "reconciled us to God in the body of his flesh through death ;" that we should have "redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins." What a mystery this ! Who can understand the depth of the riches of the love of God in thus "setting forth his righteousness, that he might be just and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus ?"⁸

The mystery of Christ "preached to the Gentiles" is the third step in this infinite series of wonders. It was to this that the apostle is especially adverting in the text. It was for this he was cast into prison, and hurried to Rome. It was of this he was "made a minister, according to the dispensation of God which is given to me for you," (thus he addresses our Colossians,) "to fulfil the word of God ; even

6) 1 Tim. iii. 16.

7) Phil. ii. 9.

8) Rom. iii. 26.

the mystery which hath been hid for ages and generations, but now is made manifest to his saints, to whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles, which is Christ in you the hope of glory.”

And this admission of the Gentiles of all nations without circumcision, without descent from Abraham, without the Levitical priesthood, without the temple, without the sacrifices of bulls and of goats, and without the ceremonial law ; struck with consternation the mind of the Jew, disturbed his notions of superiority, laid waste his favourite enclosure, and swept away the fond distinctions between the “Greek and the Jew, circumcision and uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, bond, and free ; and left Christ as all and in all.”

Yet on this every thing depended ; all the grace, all the efficacy of redemption. It was therefore that the apostle contended so earnestly against the Galatians, who corrupted by a reliance on circumcision the doctrine of justification ; and against our Colossians, who by “angel-worship and neglect of the body” corrupted the doctrine of Christ’s sole and most adequate mediation.

The concluding step follows ; the mystery of Christ dwelling in the hearts of his people as “the hope of glory ;” their “rising with Christ ;” their having their “affections set on things above where he was sitting as Mediator at the right hand of God ;” their being “dead to the law” and a worldly, earthly religion, and having “their life hid with Christ in God ;” and their waiting in humble hope, “when he shall appear, to appear with him in glory.”

But we must consider the door of utterance connected with this mystery, in the next place. *Withal praying also for us, that God would open unto us a door of utterance, to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am also in bonds.* So he speaks elsewhere. “A great and effectual door is opened unto me, and there are many adversaries.”⁹ This

⁹) 1 Cor. xvi. 19.

was to the Corinthians. Again, to the same church, in his second Epistle. "When I came to Troas to preach Christ's Gospel, a door was opened unto me of the Lord."¹⁰ In like manner, our blessed Lord, in his Epistle to the church of Philadelphia, "Behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it."

This *door of utterance* includes God's giving scope to the preaching of the Gospel by removing external hinderances; his granting to ministers by his Spirit suitable gifts and graces for discharging their office; and his vouchsafing by the same Spirit efficacy to their word that it may enter the hearts of the hearers.*

The door of utterance was closed and barred, as it were, upon the apostle by his imprisonment. It had previously remained open for a series of years, so that from "Jerusalem and round about unto Illyricum, he had fully preached the Gospel of God."¹¹

But by his imprisonment now for four years the door in providence had been shut. He was "an ambassador in bonds."¹²

Thus, in every age of the church, the door is at times shut to the dissemination of the Gospel by the obstacles which the world and Satan raise; by the persecution and imprisonment or banishment of the faithful missionary or minister; by strong prejudices excited in men's minds, as in India many years since, so that they will allow no opening for the diffusion of the Gospel; by a prevalent spirit of infidelity, skepticism, and scorn, as during the first French revolution; by a failure of means in religious societies; by heresies and tendencies to popery for a time prevailing; and by the rapid deaths of eminent missionaries, ministers, and bishops of the church.

Then again the door is opened from time to time by the

* Dav. in loc.

10) 2 Cor. iii. 12. Rev. iii. 8.

11) Rom. xv. 19

12) Eph. vi. 20.

mercy of God ; as when Paul was liberated from prison and allowed again to prosecute for a few years his evangelical labours ; as, in other ages and places, when persecutions cease, and the civil magistrate establishes and protects the true religion ; when the heathen and Mahomedan nations are placed under the sway, or brought into contact with, Protestant Christian powers, as India and China, at this time ; when heresies and leanings towards popery are checked ; when faithful men are raised up, qualified, and placed in important situations of service ; when translations of the Scriptures are made and widely diffused ; when kings and princes are touched with grace, and take an active interest in the spread of the Gospel, as Frederick the Wise of Saxony, at the blessed period of the Reformation ; when bishopricks are planted in the colonial possessions of Christian nations ; when Jerusalem is opened to Christ ; and when a spirit of inquiry, like that among the noble Beræans, is excited, to “ search the Scriptures daily to see whether the things”¹³ brought to their knowledge “ are indeed so.” What a vast field for intercessory prayer is here presented ! Well may the apostle say, “ *Continue in prayer ; withal praying for us also.*”

The full proclamation of the word of Christ is now to be noticed as the object nearest the apostle’s heart. He was anxious for a *door of utterance, to speak the mystery of Christ, that he might make it manifest as he ought to speak* ; or, as in the Epistle to the Ephesians, “ That I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the Gospel, that therein I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak.”

Observe the disinterestedness of the great apostle ; he thinks nothing of his imprisonment in itself ; he thinks nothing of deliverance and liberty as affecting his personal comfort ; it is only that he may speak boldly the mystery of the Gospel that he beseeches the Colossians to pray for him,—this is his object, this his aim, this his entreaty. This im-

plies the great importance which he attached to the preaching of this glorious mystery of Christ. The preaching of the Word is despised by the Romish apostacy, and by those who favour it. The depreciation of this grand instrument in the salvation of souls as clearly marks our Tract divines, and brands them with a leaning towards Rome, as their supercession of the Bible by tradition, and their encouragement of celibacy, and their apologies for the invocation of saints, and their general favour of Rome and Romish ways,—all based upon the Tridentine absorption of justification by inherent grace.

But the living voice of the faithful minister is just as important for the awakening and the edifying of souls, as the public prayers and sacraments are for the celebration of divine worship, and the profession of the honour of Christ before men.

But the apostle's language adverts also to his making *this mystery manifest, as he ought to speak*; and to his "opening his mouth boldly" in doing so. There is a tame and perfunctory manner of preaching the Gospel,—heartless, feeble, general, cold,—which assures the hearers that the minister neither understands the mystery of Christ, nor feels adequately its dignity and importance. This is not to make the mystery of Christ manifest.

To make known the Gospel in a clear, plain, and forcible manner; to open the mouth boldly; to speak as he ought to speak; to make manifest and patent to all the world the grandeur and infinite majesty of truth; to preach as those who understand and feel the importance of the revelation committed to them; to speak as those that must give account to God, to take all the pains possible in preparing for this duty, to care nothing for the reproaches and revilings of those who would intimidate or silence them,—this is the apostolic method.

Boldness and intrepidity are most especially required. Nothing throughout the Bible is more insisted on than the

courage and firmness of the minister, his "setting his face like a flint," his being "as an iron pillar and a brazen wall," amidst an ungodly world. This is the temper which honours God, and which God will bless.

Not the boldness, indeed, of heat or fanaticism—not the rashness and rudeness of self-conceit—not the recklessness of anger or party-spirit—but the voice and holy boldness which appeared in our Lord and his apostles, and which was accompanied with all the consideration and tenderness, and all the prudence and discretion which rendered their testimony of tenfold force.

The particular design of a standing ministry is this clear, transparent, distinctive manifestation of the mystery of Christ to every man's conscience in the sight of God. It is of little use that *the door of utterance* is opened, if there be no utterance following upon it, no manifestation of Christ; if the minister is obscure, unintelligible to the common people, and always dwelling on subordinate topics. "Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature;" this is the grand commission.

We see the apostle, after detailing the duties of domestic life, returns again to the main subject of his Epistle, the mystery of Christ. In all this he had an eye no doubt to the errors and practices of the false teachers at Colosse. They concealed the truth; they were partial in their doctrine; they foisted in the worship of angels, they pressed human traditions and an unnatural neglect of the body; there was no room left for the bold manifestation of Christ; they did not speak of it, "as they ought to speak." Thus the glory of Christ's mediation was darkened, and the holy fruits which can only be found where that mediation is duly extolled, withered away.

It has been my humble aim, I trust, for the last six years and more, in India, not to be wanting in this great duty of boldness in proclaiming the full mystery of Christ, and in guarding my reverend brethren and their flocks against the

tendencies of the popish and semi-popish errors so widely diffused.

Many, no doubt, have thought that I have been too active in this matter. Quiet and timid and pious souls, from a natural and just dread of controversies, and from not seeing in their own circle the gigantic magnitude of the evil, have not been able to judge correctly of a bishop's duty in such a country as India. May God enable me still to stand in the gap with an undaunted mind !

But with this primary duty of boldness, the apostle teaches us to unite wisdom and grace in our temper and converse.

5. *Walk in wisdom towards them that are without, redeeming the time.*

6. *Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how to answer every man.*

These verses embrace the other class of spiritual duties on which the apostle insists, and which may be ranged under the head of wisdom and prudence ; for the redemption of time, the salt of conversation, and the faculty of answering objectors, are only the details of wisdom.

They must walk in wisdom towards them that are without, either entirely, as the heathen and Mohammedan, or spiritually without by carelessness, ignorance, infidelity, or dislike of the Gospel. Towards such we must "walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise ; redeeming," and buying up "the time, because the days are evil." We must "not cast our pearls before swine," as our Lord speaks ; "lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend us." We must "become all things to all men, that by all means we may gain some." We must especially avoid, so far as we can with a good conscience, occasions of personal irritation. We must watch our opportunities. We must redeem and purchase up, at the price of wisdom and

graciousness of converse, the valuable commodity of times for doing good.

We must add, also, the salt of grace to our speech ; so that every man may be answered prudently, with sagacity, acuteness, promptitude, propriety—not with what was called the salt of Attic wit, consisting of sharp replies, flashes of genius and coruscations of brilliancy, which often degenerate into ridicule, sarcasm, skepticism, and pride of understanding ; but with the reasonable and agreeable condiment of grace, kindness, courtesy ; rendering our instruction useful and acceptable to “ every one who asks us a reason of the hope that is in us, with meekness and fear.”

What a charge, then, is the Christian ministry ! “ Who can be sufficient for these things ?” Where shall we find the boldness, and yet the wisdom ; where the dignity, and yet the graciousness ; where the integrity which may please God, and yet the kindness and unction which may conciliate men ?

To God, our Saviour, our Mediator, our Master, we must look up, that by his Holy Spirit we may have grace thus to “ fulfil the ministry we have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the Gospel of the grace of God.”

LECTURE XXXIII.

APOSTOLIC SYMPATHY AND SALUTATIONS.

CoL. iv. 7—13.

THE second part of our apostle's conclusion of his Epistle is now to be considered, containing his usual salutations. These are more copious than in any other, except that to the Romans ; and probably with the view of conciliating the

minds of the Colossians by the affection and tenderness which they breathed.

Christianity builds her morals on truth, and then recommends them by tenderness and sympathy. The operations of grace and an entire dependence on those operations do not supersede in the way of means the mutual aids of brethren towards each other, the feelings of gratitude to the helpers God has raised up for us, and the warm language of affection and love towards them. These are as “the bands and joints,” as the apostle speaks, “by which the body having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God.”

Every commendation and salutation, moreover, of our apostle, as we shall see, is appropriate, and has a bearing on the state of the Colossian church, and the errors against which he wished to guard them. The humility of the blessed apostle’s mind throughout, is also apparent, as we noticed in our second lecture, in associating all around him in his labours, saluting every one with a grateful mind who was a helper to him, and intermixing praises, in all lowliness and meekness, with his exhortations, as his full heart judged best.

We shall find he begins with noticing the persons who conveyed the Epistle. He then mentions some particular friends from the circumcision. Epaphras is commended, in the next place, at some length. And Luke and Demas briefly. After this, he sends his salutation to the Laodicean brethren, and directs his Epistle to be read amongst them. Then he conveys a message to Archippus: and lastly, adds in his own hand, as usual, an attestation to the whole Epistle.

7. *All my state shall Tychicus declare unto you, who is a beloved brother, and a faithful minister and fellow-servant in the Lord:*

8. *Whom I have sent unto you for the same purpose, that he might know your state, and comfort your hearts;*

9. *With Onesimus, a faithful and beloved brother, who is one of you. They shall make known unto you all things which are done here.*

Tychicus and Onesimus were sent by the imprisoned apostle to bear his letter to the Colossian church. Though he was himself in chains and in danger of his life, he thinks nothing of himself, but only of their welfare. His body is shut up, but his mind is still at liberty, and cares for all the churches. "The word of God," as he elsewhere speaks, "is not bound."

Tychicus is mentioned in a manner similar to this in the parallel Epistle. "But that ye may know my affairs, and how I do, Tychicus, a beloved brother and faithful minister in the Lord, shall make known to you all things; whom I have sent unto you for the same purpose, that ye might know our affairs, and that he might comfort your hearts."¹

In like manner, he speaks to the Thessalonians concerning another of his brethren: "Wherefore, when we could no longer forbear, we thought it good to be left at Athens alone; and sent Timotheus," "to establish you," "lest by some means the tempter have tempted you, and our labour be in vain."²

Such is the wisdom of our apostle in the circumstances of peril in which the Colossians were. Epaphras, indeed, was a fellow prisoner, and compelled to remain with him; but he dispatches two of his pious helpers instantly, in order to bear his Epistle to them, informing them more in detail of every thing relating to his imprisonment and the progress of the Gospel, and to console and encourage them under the sorrows and disturbances occasioned by the false teachers.

Theophylact says that the apostle left details to be communicated by these messengers, that his Epistle might not be too long; that the letter-bearers might have something to relate, and be thus held in higher esteem; that he might show his confidence in them; and that he might convey some messages by them not so proper to be committed to writing.*

Mutual communication is very consoling and beneficial.

* Apud Bloomf. in loc.

1) Eph. vi. 21, 22.

2) 1 Thess. iii. 1—5.

We are social creatures, and are to sympathize with each other, and hold up each other's hands. The greatest of the apostles, when propagating the Gospel under the miraculous inspiration of the Holy Ghost, yet considers this intercommunity of tidings necessary to the edification of the churches. He wishes all the particulars of his own circumstances to be known to the Colossians, and to receive himself all the details of theirs. Some time had elapsed since Epaphras had come to him with the account of the Judaizing and philosophizing zealots who were sowing their fatal errors at Colosse; he wishes, therefore, to learn afresh by means of the brethren who conveyed his Epistle to them, the present position of their affairs. He was anxious, also, *to comfort their hearts* under the perplexities, and doubt, and fears, which the false teachers would occasion, by sending two of his companions and helpers to them, who would inform them of the apostle's constancy, undaunted mind, and decided condemnation of the incipient corruptions arising amongst them; and who would encourage them to "stand fast in the faith," and not be moved away from the simplicity of the Gospel and the sole and all-sufficient mediation of the Lord Christ.

The description which the apostle gives of the two messengers is instructive; Tychicus, he speaks of as *a beloved brother and faithful minister and fellow-servant in the Lord*. For the apostle unites all his helpers with him in love and honour. Far from taking advantage either of his authority as an apostle, or his immediate inspiration, or his sufferings, he humbles himself before the least of his brethren, exalts their faithful labours, and associates them with his own.

Onesimus is, also, commended as *a faithful and beloved brother*. He was by birth or descent of Phrygia, probably of the very city of Colosse; and if he be the same person as the apostle mentions in his Epistle to Philemon, which we have every reason to think, his history is peculiarly affecting. That most touching letter was written at the same time with those to Philippi, Ephesus, and Colosse, and Phile-

mon is generally supposed to have been an inhabitant of Colosse, and to have received the Epistle addressed to him by the hands of Onesimus. If this be so, how conspicuous was the grace of God in his conversion! A fugitive slave, and perhaps a dishonest one, flies to Rome. He there meets with the blessed apostle, and hears and believes the Gospel of Christ. The apostle says he had “begotten him in his bonds.” He sends him back immediately to his master with the letter to which we have referred. Philemon no doubt joyfully complied with the aged apostle’s request, and restored him to his favour. Onesimus is now described as *a faithful and beloved brother*; and having been doubtless set at liberty, also, by his master, he discharged the commission which St. Paul intrusted to him, and became afterwards, as is generally thought, a minister of Christ.

Such is the transforming grace of the Gospel—such its powers in changing and renewing the heart—such its efficacy in obliterating all former distinctions and degradations, and elevating a poor slave to the dignity of a beloved brother of the greatest of the apostles. We have reason to think that Onesimus was not the only instance of such very peculiar transformation. The apostle alludes, in his Epistle to the Ephesians, to the former vices of the converts there, when he says, “Let him that stole, steal no more, but rather let him labour.”³ And to the Corinthians, after enumerating “Thieves, extortioners, idolaters,” and others of the vilest character, he distinctly says, “And such were some of you; but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified.”⁴

O blessed and almighty power of the grace of Christ! Not only the wise and learned and self-righteous Pharisee and freeman like Paul, but the profligate, the dishonest, the despised slave like Onesimus, is made “a new creature,” and exalted to “the fellowship of the saints.”

10. *Aristarchus my fellow-prisoner saluteth you, and Marcus, sis-*

3) Eph. iv. 28.

4) 1 Cor. vii. 9—11.

ter's son to Barnabas, (*touching whom ye received commandments : if he come unto you, receive him ;*)

11. *And Jesus, which is called Justus, who are of the circumcision. These only are my fellow-workers unto the kingdom of God, which have been a comfort unto me.*

Aristarchus was a Jew, though born in Thessalonica. He was hurried with Gaius into the theatre at Ephesus, by Demetrius and his craftsmen, and he accompanied St. Paul from Greece to Jerusalem with the collections for the saints. When Paul was imprisoned in Judea, he abode with him ; and when he went into Italy, he also went, and remained with him there during his confinement ; till at length he became, as it appears, obnoxious to the magistrates, and was cast into prison.

Marcus, sister's son to Barnabas, or John Mark, as he is elsewhere called, had been the occasion of a contention between Paul and Barnabas, which led to their separating from each other, and following different scenes of labour. It appears that Mark had, from cowardice or some other motive, departed from them from Pamphylia, and went not with them to the work. Upon this, when his kinsman Barnabas determined, from affection to him as his uncle, to take him with them, notwithstanding his timid and selfish behaviour, Paul thought it not good thus to distinguish a young and unstable disciple.⁵

It should seem, also, that St. Paul had given some injunctions to the Colossians—*touching whom ye received commandment*—not to receive John Mark as a minister. Now, however, it appears that the young man had returned to a right spirit, and had been restored to the apostle's confidence ; so that he reverses his former directions, and bids them to receive him.

Such is the tenderness and yet the fidelity of the apostle ; he will not encourage indolence and cowardice, on the one hand, nor will he refuse, on the other, to receive back a pen-

5) Acts xv. 36—40.

itent when beginning to return to a sense of his duty. Probably the apostle's displeasure, some ten or twelve years before, had weighed upon his mind, and with Barnabas' prayers and example had brought him to a right view of his misconduct.

We must not despair of young ministers if they fall off from the spirit and full work of the minister of the Gospel for a time; God may bring them back; and we must then rejoice to remove any marks of displeasure which we may have been compelled to inflict upon them.

St. Paul's third choice helper from the circumcision was *Jesus, who was called*, possibly by the Romans on account of his conspicuous integrity, *Justus*. The apostle adds, that these three *were the only fellow-workers of the circumcision unto the kingdom of God which had been a comfort unto him*; whereas the rest of the Jewish converts had been a grief and hinderance unto him, by either favouring openly the Platonists and Pythagoreans, and following the false philosophy of these leaders, or by being shaken in mind and too much inclined to listen to their enticing words. We learn from the Epistle sent to Philippi at the same time from his prison at Rome with this to Colosse, that "some preached Christ" in that church "of envy and strife, supposing to add affliction to his bonds."⁶ So few were there at Rome among the Jewish converts—three only—who were *a comfort unto him*, by cordially uniting with him in preaching the kingdom of God among the Gentiles, and by consoling him under his bonds, by their animating converse, hearty counsel, and zealous concurrence and assistance in all his designs. The rest were either preaching Christ of contention, or negligent altogether of the apostle's sacred cause.

Often are the greatest ministers almost deserted and left alone by timid and time-serving Christians in moments of

6) Phil. i. 24, 25.

emergency and peril. The few faithful souls, therefore, are the more to be commended and loved.*

12. *Epaphras, who is one of you, a servant of Christ, saluteth you, always labouring fervently for you in prayers, that ye may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God.*

13. *For I bear him record, that he hath a great zeal for you, and them that are in Laodicea, and them in Hierapolis.*

The apostle, having mentioned the bearers of his epistle, and his three choice friends of the circumcision, dwells now on the character of Epaphras, who, like Onesimus, was their fellow-countryman, and who had probably come to St. Paul with the first tidings of the errors creeping into the Colossian church, as we have already stated.

The apostle had mentioned him with peculiar commendation in his first chapter, "As ye also learned of Epaphras, our dear fellow-servant, who is for you a faithful minister of Christ; who also declared unto us your love in the Spirit." He now again expresses his full confidence in him, and testifies to his zeal and prayers for the three adjoining cities where the false teachers were at work.

It should rather seem from this, that insinuations had been thrown out by these seducers against his fidelity, full knowledge and information respecting the Gospel, and real

* The Protestant commentators here most justly ask if Peter were then at Rome, and continued there twenty-five years as its first bishop, as the Romish writers pretend; how comes it to pass that the apostle does not mention him amongst his friends of the circumcision? though Peter had addressed so admirable an epistle to the churches four years or so before, and was thoroughly reconciled to St. Paul as "his beloved brother" writing with the divine "wisdom given unto him;"⁷ as his second epistle shows. This negative inference is absolutely conclusive, for the apostle says of Aristarchus, Marcus and Justus, *these only are my fellow-workers unto the kingdom of God*; and he distinctly declares that they were *of the circumcision*.

Such is popery. Most of its peculiar facts, as well as doctrines and practices, are interlarded with mere fables and traditions.

love for the flocks—for nothing is more common with enthusiasts and heretics, than to attempt to sap the affections of Christians towards their faithful pastors. Thus they begin ; then error is soon listened to with acquiescence.

The apostle having called him *a servant of Christ*, informs them, that, whatever they may have heard to his prejudice, he was in fact *always labouring fervently in prayers for them, that they might stand perfect and complete in all the will of God*. How affecting is the circumstance that Epaphras, who had brought to St. Paul the accounts of the disorders at Colosse, should be described as thus labouring, striving, persevering, in prayer for them !

It is thus the faithful pastor is distinguished. His reproofs are not connected with any personal feelings. He must indeed resist fundamental errors. He must report to his fathers and superiors in the church the progress of such errors. He must consult them as to the remedies to be applied. But all this flows from love, which appears from *his labouring at the same time fervently for them in prayers to the God of all grace, by whom alone truth can be enthroned in the heart, who alone can give success to the labours of ministers, and whose Holy Spirit is the grand and primary teacher—that they may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God*.

This had respect, in the case of the Colossians, to the errors of the Judaizing, Platonizing, Pythagorizing doctors. These were insinuating that the converts could not be *perfect and complete* without the addition of angel mediators, prayers to saints, and invocation of the more eminent departed servants of God—and that abstinences, and traditions, and celibacy, and neglect of the body, were necessary to raise them to the greatest heights of holiness.

In opposition to this, the apostle had already prayed for them that they might “be filled with a knowledge of God’s will ;” and that they might “come to all the riches of the full assurance of understanding to the acknowledgment of

the mystery of God and the Father and of Christ." And he now testifies that Epaphras, their countryman, the servant of Christ, their beloved and faithful minister, who brought him tidings of their general steadfastness in the faith, and their love in the Spirit to him and to one another, was always *labouring fervently in his prayers*, that they might not only be perfect and complete, but stand firm as such on the field of battle as triumphant conquerors, boldly and undauntedly, after repelling all their foes. So the apostle to the Ephesians exhorts them to "withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand" as conquerors on the field. This implies that Epaphras himself was fully informed as to the real nature of the Gospel.

This is what we should aim at, to *stand* triumphantly *perfect and complete in all the will of God*, as to fundamental truth. As Christ was a divine and all-perfect Saviour, as he was "the image of the invisible God," as he had "in him all the fulness of the Godhead bodily," as he was "by the blood of his cross reconciling all things unto himself;" so let us stand exclusively relying on him; let us make him our "hope of glory;" let us trust him as our "All and in all." Let us dread nothing so much as "not holding him as the head;" and let us account ourselves truly and fully *complete in him* as to all the parts of salvation. Thus shall we be wanting in no fundamental truths of the will of God revealed for our pardon, sanctification, guidance, and consolation.

The apostle adds, that he *bears him record that he had a great zeal for the Colossians and them that were in Laodicea and them in Hierapolis*. This was in order to conciliate their regard and confidence still more towards Epaphras, when he should return to them (for now, as he tells Philemon, he was his fellow-prisoner at Rome). The three contiguous churches had been probably planted at the same time by Epaphras; had before their conversion been tainted with the same doctrines and usages of Plato and Pythagoras, and were now

endangered by the same Jewish zealots building on the dreams of a vain philosophy, and uniting with them the ceremonies of Moses and the abstinences and traditions of men.

The warm and holy zeal of Epaphras was kindled and overflowing, as it were, in the view of these dangers, and he was labouring night and day in his prayers for their establishment in the simplicity of Christ.

Here, then, let us pause. May God grant to all his ministers the humility and tenderness of St. Paul towards his fellow-labourers in the Gospel! May God grant us many such as Tychicus and Onesimus in all our churches and missions, who may become faithful ministers, whatever their previous character may have been. May such as John Mark once was, return to their first fidelity; and those who resemble Aristarchus and Justus, be “a comfort to us,” amidst the timidity of too many in critical times! And may many such as the faithful Epaphras *labour fervently for us, that we may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God.*

LECTURE XXXIV.

LUKE AND DEMAS—THE LAODICEAN BRETHREN—NYMPHAS—CHARGE CONCERNING THIS EPISTLE, AND ONE FROM LAODICEA—MESSAGE TO ARCHIPPUS—THE APOSTLE’S CONCLUDING SALUTATION.

COL. iv. 14—18.

WE have considered our apostle’s affectionate notice of the bearers of his epistle, and of his three fellow-helpers from the circumcision; and also his high commendation of Epaphras.

We proceed next to his brief mention of Luke and Demas.

14. *Luke, the beloved physician, and Demas, greet you.*

This Luke is generally considered to be the same as the evangelist, and companion of St. Paul in his travels, mentioned in the Acts of the Apostles. He had accompanied him to Judea, and abode with him during the two years of his imprisonment at Jerusalem and Cæsarea, and was no doubt present at his trial before Festus and Felix. When Paul was sent a prisoner to Italy, Luke still attended him; and at the apostle's second and final imprisonment at Rome, stood by him when others through fear deserted him. This circumstance is mentioned in the second Epistle to Timothy in a most marked manner, "Only Luke is with me." For then it was that at "his first answer no man stood by him, but all men forsook him."¹

He may well, therefore, be described as *beloved*; for such fidelity, through so long a period of such trials, was calculated to excite the warmest affections of the apostle's tender and grateful heart.

We learn also here that Luke was a physician, which may possibly have been stated by the apostle, not only to distinguish him from others of the same name, but also to teach us that the profession of medicine should be duly honoured and esteemed in the church, and not considered incompatible with the most zealous and continued fidelity in the Gospel. Thank God, many beloved physicians have at different periods borne this character; though, alas! the number, in some ages of the church, has been but few! Their familiarity with the wonders of God in the human frame, the circumstances of their early medical education and associations, and the services of their profession, intrenching at times on the rest of the Lord's day, give occasion too often, through the hardness of man's heart, to irreligion and infidelity.

We may observe, also, that affection and love to those

1) 2 Tim iv. 11, 16.

who unite piety with zeal in performing the functions of the physician, should be considered as a fit and suitable return for their assiduous services. They deserve our love, as well as the mere secular remuneration which their education, and talents, and skill may merit. There is no profession where friendships are so often generated. And few Christians fill a more useful and exalted position in the church than the pious, enlightened physician.

We may observe, further, that in the travels of missionaries or other pastors, the accompanying services of a pious, skilful medical friend and brother in the Gospel, is of great moment, and a source of much consolation.

The name of Demas excites our sorrow, because in our apostle's subsequent epistle, about three years after to Timothy, he is mentioned as having "forsaken him, having loved the present world, and having departed for Thessalonica,"² For it is generally considered that he is the same person. Whether he finally apostatized or not, we cannot tell; but his name stands as a beacon and warning, like that of Lot's wife, of the danger of the love of the world. At one time he is St. Paul's companion in tribulation, at another his faith and courage fail; at one moment he sends salutations to the Colossian brethren, at another he loves the world too much to give up all for Christ. Perhaps some prospect of secular advantage offered itself like "the golden wedge and Babylonish garment"³ to Achan; and "he coveted it," and went off to Thessalonica in pursuit of it; not willing to hazard himself longer by continuing with the apostle in his last trial and sufferings for the Gospel.

Let us pray for grace to resemble Luke the beloved physician, and not Demas, the lover of this present, miserable, deceitful, and perishing world!

The apostle having finished the salutations of those around him, proceeds to send his own benedictions to the Laodicean brethren, and especially to one of their number.

2) 2 Tim. iv. 10.

3) Joshua vii. 21.

15. *Salute the brethren which are in Laodicea, and Nymphas, and the church which is in his house.*

The apostle sends his apostolical blessing to the brethren at Laodicea in particular, and to Nymphas, as he was about to give a most important direction with regard to them. It is probable that the errors concerning the mediation of Christ were most prevalent there, and that it was most needful that this epistle should be solemnly and publicly read amongst them. He was particular, therefore, in saluting the faithful in that place, as a preparation.

When we read of the fearful "lukewarmness" of the Laodicean church in about thirty years from this time, when our Lord addressed the last of the seven Apocalyptical Epistles to it, we are struck, as we noted in our introductory lecture, with a melancholy reflection on the rapid mischief that one false principle, such as saint invocation, may produce in the course of a single generation. In the year 54, St. Paul salutes the brethren there without casting any blame especially upon them; and in the year 96, our Lord pronounces them "neither cold nor hot," and in danger of being "spued out of his mouth"—their state was aggravated by their not knowing their miserable condition; for error infallibly fills men with pride, and blinds them to their real condition. The heart-searching, "faithful and true Witness," however; "the Amen," the "beginning of the creation of God;" he "by whom all things were created that are in heaven and in earth, visible and invisible;" declares that they were, notwithstanding their inventions in religion, and their self-conceit, "wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked."⁴

One distinguished Christian there was, however, at Laodicea, Nymphas, who had probably a numerous family which, having embraced Christianity, constituted *a church in his house*; a select body called out of the world, and celebrating

4) Rev. iii. 17.

the praises of God, hearing and reading his Holy Word, and offering prayers and intercessions to him regularly in their family devotions. To these the promise would extend,—“Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.”⁵ So the apostle mentions that there was *a church in the house* of Priscilla and Aquila; and in his Epistle to Philemon, he addresses, not only him, but “his beloved Apphia and Archippus, his fellow-soldier, and the church in his house.” Blessed families of which this can be said! The case of Nymphas is a specimen of what it becomes all the families of Christians to be; they should be so many little churches. Each master of a house should consider the duty to be imposed upon him to bring up his children and servants in the fear of God, to exercise a holy discipline among them, and to form them to the resemblance of a Christian congregation or church; especially in times of prevalent error and defection from the Gospel.

16. *And when this Epistle is read among you, cause that it be read also in the church of the Laodiceans, and that ye likewise read the Epistle from Laodicea.*

It appears then, that the epistles of St. Paul were publicly read in the churches; for he gives the direction as a matter usual and well understood. A capital and most important fact this; and a model for all Christian churches in all ages and places. Nothing can be more clearly condemnatory of the practice of the Church of Rome, than such a plain and unequivocal command. Yet Romanists prohibit the general perusal of the Scriptures, and read only small portions, and these in a language not understood of the people in the public worship of Almighty God. St. Paul orders his entire epistle to be read publicly to the congregation.

But if one epistle was thus directed expressly to be read, then all the epistles are equally required to be solemnly read in the church. The Old Testament was, as we know, con-

5) Matt. xviii. 20.

stantly recited in the Jewish synagogues ; as is manifest in the case of our Lord at Nazareth, which we have lately noticed ; and as appears, also, when St. Paul was at Antioch, in Pisidia ; for it was not till “after the reading of the law and the prophets,” that “the rulers of the synagogue sent unto them” (Paul and Barnabas) “saying, Ye men and brethren, if ye have any word of exhortation to the people, say on.”⁶ The same principle applies in a yet stronger manner to the New Testament. It is the constant perusal of the Scriptures, the continual and ready comparison of all doctrines and practices with them, the supremacy avowedly conceded to them, as in our 6th Article, which can alone preserve a church in the purity of the Gospel. Shut out the Bible, and superstitions instantly begin to rush in.

It is observable that in the first of our apostle’s fourteen epistles, that to the Thessalonians, a similar command is given, and with more solemnity: “I charge you by the Lord that this epistle be read unto all the holy brethren.”⁷

In the face of these commands of God, if “the man of sin” sets up, as he does, his prohibitions, can we wonder that all evils and superstitions should follow ; that the invocation of saints, the worship of images, the adoration of the Virgin, and the veneration of altars, tombs, and relics should supersede the mediation of Christ ; and that a multitude of uncommanded ceremonies and abstinences, and a whole torrent of will-worship should follow in the train ?

The apostle, moreover, had an especial reason for commanding his Colossian letter to be read at Laodicea, that of the probable greater prevalence there of the errors he was endeavouring to check, than at Colosse, as we have already noted.

It is not certain to what other epistle the apostle refers when he directs the Colossians to *read the epistle from Laodicea*. Some suppose that he alludes to a letter not preserved ; as they consider it no more probable that all the epistles

6) Acts xiii. 15.

7) 1 Thess. v. 27.

which the apostle ever wrote are preserved, than all the words and actions of our blessed Lord. But this is an unnecessary and dangerous admission. It is now almost universally considered by the best commentators, that it was the Epistle to the Ephesians which is referred to; and that the apostle sent word by Tychicus, who carried that letter, to transmit a copy of it to the Laodiceans, with an order for them to forward it to the Colossians.

If this be so, then there was a blessed intercommunication of the divine letters from one church to another, before the volume of the New Testament was completed, which was not for more than thirty years afterwards. For the same is to be said of all the epistles. Though written at first to certain churches, yet as the doctrine was of perpetual force, and common to all the Christian flocks in all ages, the general circulation of them was indispensably necessary.

We may, also, in this case consider the Epistle to the Colossians as a continuation of the circular one to the Ephesians. Indeed, it is remarkable that the Ephesian letter seems calculated to be of general utility; for it contains so little peculiar to the church at Ephesus, and so much important instruction of universal interest, as to be adapted eminently to such a purpose. From the earliest period some doubt, moreover, was raised as to the precise church to which it was addressed. Tertullian in the second century, quotes Marcion as calling it "the Epistle to the Laodiceans."* The name Ephesus, in the first verse, upon which word singly depends the proof that the epistle was written to the Ephesians, is not read in all manuscripts; and a total omission of all salutations to the chief persons of a church like Ephesus, where the apostle had resided three years, leans the same way. The external evidence, however, is now considered to preponderate on the whole in favour of the received opinion; and it is universally considered as addressed to the Ephesian church.

* Scott in pref. to Coloss.

We may still regard the special topics treated of more at length in the Epistle to the Ephesians; for example, much of the first, third, and fifth chapters; as designedly passed over more slightly in that to the Colossians, as the apostle intended the two to be read in the churches together as supplementary the one to the other.

But the grand and most important fact stands out on apostolical authority, that the divine epistles of St. Paul were communicated from church to church, and were read publicly for the instruction of the faithful. Let this never be forgotten.

17. And say to Archippus, Take heed to the ministry which thou hast received in the Lord, that thou fulfil it.

A most important caution at the close of such an epistle, and with such a flood of errors threatening the Colossian church. Nothing like it occurs in any other of our apostle's letters.

Archippus is mentioned in the introduction of his contemporary Epistle to Philemon: "Paul a prisoner of Jesus Christ" to "Archippus our fellow-soldier;"⁸ and also in the Epistle to Timothy and Titus.⁹ He is thought to have been a son or near relation of Philemon, and to have resided in his family; which in consequence was so pious and well-regulated, as to merit, as we have noticed, the name of a Christian church.

It is probable that he was young in the ministry, and was filling the situation and discharging the difficult duties of Epaphras, during his absence at Rome. He might also have betrayed some symptoms of timidity and negligence; and thus have required a special message being addressed to him. And this St. Paul sends by means of the church at Colosse. He might have admonished him in his private name, but he employs the intervention of the whole flock, perhaps in order to intimate that respectful representations may at times be fitly

8) Phil. 2.

9) 2 Tim. iv. 12. Tit. iii. 12.

made by a church to their pastors, who should candidly weigh such communications with a sincere desire to profit by them.

Archippus is reminded that *his ministry* was from *the Lord* ; that he must *take heed to it* ; and that his grand duty was to *fulfil it*.

For whatever instruments the Lord Jesus was pleased to use in calling him into the vineyard, it was from him he received the ministry of the word ; to him he was accountable for it ; his assistance and authority he was to expect in discharging its duties ; and he was bound to seek his glory in a decided preference to his own ease, security, reputation, and accommodation.

Order in the church is, indeed, essential, as St. Paul every where teaches ; examinations of the qualifications of candidates for the sacred ministry is most necessary, as is evident from the Epistles to Timothy and Titus ; solemn ordination and setting apart by the prayers and imposition of hands of those who have “due authority in the church” are also indispensable. But the primary authority and designation are from the Lord Christ. St. Paul says, when speaking of “finishing his course with joy,” that the ministry he had received, was “from the Lord Jesus.”¹⁰ In like manner, he “thanks Christ Jesus the Lord who enabled him, for that he counted him worthy, putting him into the ministry.”¹¹ And it was “Christ,” and no other, who, when he “ascended up on high, gave some apostles, and some prophets, and some pastors and teachers.”¹²

No one will fulfil his ministry who does not constantly bear in mind the direct authority and commission received from the Lord Christ.

Archippus was next to *take heed to this ministry* ; to beware of dangers ; to look widely around him ; to be careful to conduct himself with diligence, faithfulness, boldness, and zealous affection ; to direct all his endeavours to the edifica-

10) Acts xx. 24.

11) 1 Tim. i. 12.

12) Eph. iv. 11.

tion of believers and the conversion of sinners by sound doctrine, a holy example, fervent prayers, and unwearied labours. He must "take heed to himself and to the doctrine;"¹³ for otherwise the smiles, flatteries, and frowns of the world, the spirit of error, and the various workings of self-love would turn him aside, endanger his own soul, soothe his flock into a formal profession, and lamentably disappoint the promising hopes which had been entertained at first of his usefulness.

Especially, would Archippus be called on to *take heed* in such a church as Colosse, amidst artful, and learned, and plausible opponents, with the minds of many shaken in their steadfastness, and with the ruinous consequences in view which would follow from his encouraging in any measure the fatal errors of angel-mediation and will-worship.

For his grand object, and that of every pastor should be *to fulfil*, "and make full proof," as the apostle elsewhere speaks, "of his ministry."¹⁴ So in the first chapter he tells the Colossians that he "was made a minister"—*to fulfil* (margin, fully to preach) "the word of God." So he informs the Romans that "from Jerusalem and round about unto Illyricum, he had fully preached the gospel of Christ."¹⁵ And in the last epistle, as it is supposed, which he ever wrote, he informs Timothy, that "the Lord stood with him and strengthened him," (at his first answer,) "that the preaching might be fully known."¹⁶ And he expresses his belief to the Romans, that "when he came to them, it would be in the fulness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ."¹⁷

This language implies, in the case of such a church as Colosse, that Archippus, in the face of false teachers, should fully and adequately make known the whole truth of Christ; that he should conceal nothing, hide nothing; but diligently, and carefully, and fully discharge the trust committed to him, "not as pleasing men, but God which trieth our

13) 1 Tim. iv. 16.

14) 2 Tim. iv. 5.

15) Rom. xv. 20.

16) 2 Tim. v. 17.

17) Rom. xv. 29.

hearts ;”¹⁸ that he might be able to take his flock “to record that he was pure from the blood of all men ;” for he had “kept back nothing profitable,” but had “taught them publicly and from house to house,” and not “shunned to declare to them all the counsel of God.”¹⁹

This would lead Archippus, and it should lead us, not to connive at plausible heresies, not to be swayed by the respectability, and stations, and learning, and apparent piety of any leaders, where errors like those at Colosse are concerned.

Archippus no doubt would imitate the blessed apostle in his course of argument in this epistle, the moment he received it. He would *fulfil his ministry* by explaining and enforcing every topic. He would first lay the foundation of truth firmly in the person and glory of Christ’s mediatorial character ; then refute and condemn distinctly, with the apostle, the worship of angels, human traditions, uncommanded austerities, and all the endless forms of will-worship. Next he would contrast with this the true method of sanctification “in rising with Christ” from the world and a worldly religion ; and then proceed to exhort the Colossians to “mortify the old man,” and to clothe the new with all suitable tempers and graces ; nourishing him with the study and knowledge of the Word of God. He would then enforce relative duties. Lastly, he would conclude with entreaties for their prayers, that the apostle might have “a door of utterance to make known the mystery of Christ.”²⁰

Thus he would *fulfil his ministry* by a course of doctrine, rich and appropriate, and resting on St. Paul’s inspired example, in opposition to meagre statements, obscure generalities, subordinate topics, uninteresting dissertations, and endless common-places ; which neither instruct, nor sanctify, nor save.

18) 1 Thess. ii. 4.

19) Acts xx. 20, 21.

20) Col. i. ; ii. ; iii. 1-4 ; 5-9 ; 10-15 ; 16, 17, 18 ; iv. i. 2-6.

18. *The salutation by the hand of me Paul. Remember my bonds. Grace be with you. Amen.*

And thus the blessed apostle of the Gentiles closes this most instructive and affecting epistle. The subscription with his own hand was a token of love, and also a guard against the false and spurious epistles which soon began to be disseminated*—*remember my bonds*. He here for the third time mentions his chains, not from distrust or dejection, but that the Colossians might remember what he had been suffering for the Gospel now for four years, might know that he felt as a man all the hardships he was willing to endure for Christ, that he “was an ambassador in bonds,” and was “filling up that which was behind of the sufferings of Christ for his body’s sake, which was the church;” and that his firm and undaunted constancy, and full persuasion of the truth of the Gospel which he had preached, should confirm them in their faith, render them constant in enduring persecutions for the same cause, and induce them to pay the more willing and affectionate regard to the whole of his epistle. He concludes with praying that grace might be with them; or in the more expanded language of his epistle to the Corinthians, “The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all. Amen.”²¹

And with what prayer can we close our instructions so appropriate as this! It is grace that we all need, ministers and people; grace to illuminate; grace to teach; grace to strengthen; grace to bless. If we have but larger and larger measures of the grace and free favour of God through our dying and rising Mediator, and by the power of the Holy

* There was one which pretended to be an epistle of his to the Laodiceans, among a multitude of others; of which an account may be seen in the critical writers on the New Testament, Lardner, J. Jones, H. Horne, and others.

Spirit, we shall want nothing else for living, whilst life lasts, unto the Lord, and when we come to die, for dying unto the Lord—so that for us “to live may be Christ, and to die gain.”

LECTURE XXXV.

CONCLUSION.

WE have completed our course of lectures on this instructive and most important epistle, and have endeavoured to adapt the apostle's argument to the errors of the times in which we live. The grand fundamental doctrine of the mediation of Christ we have found to be the centre-truth insisted on, in opposition to the idolatry and superstition of saint-mediation and endless petty observances; and we have aimed at following step by step our apostle's method in resisting the pretences of similar corruptions in our own day.

Some general remarks may, in conclusion, be expected on the whole epistle, with a view to a practical application of its doctrine and spirit to the heart and conscience, more especially of those who are ministers of our apostolical church, in such a critical period as the present.

I. We may observe, then, that *the practical end in view of Christianity*, as appears from this epistle, is love to God and man, devotion, meekness, preparation for heaven. This is its object. The Christian has more than enough to do with his own heart and his interior walk with God; and he turns not aside to controversy, except as compelled by fidelity to Christ in the station he occupies. His element is prayer, separation of affection from the world, watchfulness over his motives, the study of his Saviour's love, and the ex-

perience of his grace, the imitation of his character, and anticipation of his second coming.

Christianity is a heavenly thing ; the life of God in the soul of man ; a new creation ; the reduction of a wayward fallen creature to the obedience of his Maker, Redeemer, and Sanctifier ; the love of God again become, as in Adam at his first creation, the master-affection of the soul. This spirit of Christianity is lowliness of heart ; its " life is hid with Christ in God ;" its joys and conflicts are unknown to the world ; its fellowship is with the Father through the Son, and by the grace of the Holy Ghost ; its fruits are " bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering ; its centre, devotion ; its hope, heaven.

The Christian goes forth from his closet to the performance of his family and social duties, and the business and bustle of life with fear and trembling ; he knows the real difficulty of preserving the inward power of grace ; he knows the danger of " being moved away from the hope of the Gospel ;" he knows the snares of Satan, and the "enticing words" of human wisdom ; he knows that a man may be a theologian, a controversialist, a preacher, a partisan, a professor of the purest form of religion, without being a mature, consistent Christian. He is glad, therefore, to return to privacy, to his Bible, his Saviour, the study of his heart, prayer, confession, praise, longing after larger measures of the Holy Spirit, and of the wisdom and holiness which he vouchsafes.

Here then is the end in view of Christianity as deduced from the epistle before us—"the peace of God keeping the heart"—the will subdued to God's will—obedience the fruit of internal principle ; a growing "meekness for the inheritance of the saints in light ;" the soul attracted more powerfully towards "things that are above" as faith brings them more vividly within the view, and he beholds Christ more intensely, "sitting at the right hand of God." In this spirit, the humble Christian descends into the valley of the shadow

of death, fearing no evil, because "Christ is his all," and he believes that "when Christ who is his life shall appear, then shall he also appear with him in glory." Thus, "death is swallowed up in victory."

Allow me, then, to ask, is this our view of the character and temper which Christianity is intended to form? If we do not agree with St. Paul in this, we can agree in nothing else. Religion must be a living principle. The "carnal mind is enmity against God;" the new and spiritual mind reposes in him. If we understand not this fundamental point, let us earnestly pray that "the eyes of our understanding" may be opened, that we may know what it is that Christianity designs to do in us, and what it must do, if we are to be saved.

II. But we may learn, further, from our Epistle, *in what manner this high end of Christianity is produced, and how it stands connected with the peculiar doctrines of the Gospel.*

For the Christian is one, as our apostle teaches us, who is "risen with Christ" from the death and tomb of sin; he has been rescued from the "power of darkness, and translated into the kingdom of the Son of God's love;" he has the true "circumcision of the Spirit;" he has "put off the old man with his deeds." He is "reconciled to God through the blood of the" mysterious "cross;" and has "redemption through that blood, even the forgiveness of sins."

Here are the principles of the new life in the soul of man distinctly laid down, by which Christianity labours to attain her end in love, devotion, and meetness for heaven.

The first consequence of this internal life, however feeble, is, that when "the Gospel comes" to this awakened sinner, "as it does to all the world," he knows it to be "the grace of God in truth." A dawn of light has this result. The preventing grace of God has touched his heart; and the Gospel in all its amplitude is now felt to be exactly adapted to his wants and desires.

To his whole soul Christ is gradually welcomed, as set forth in this Epistle, and he longs to arrive at all "the riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgment of the mystery of God and the Father and of Christ."

Thus he comes at length to perceive in what sense he is "complete in Christ," fully accomplished and supplied, as to all the points of salvation; and he finds that it extends to every thing, to justification, sanctification, consolation, the hope of final victory, and strength for a holy life and conversation.

As to justification, he wants no inventions of men, no mediation of saints; he hath "redemption in Christ's blood, even the forgiveness of sins. God hath in him forgiven him all trespasses;" he hath "reconciled him to himself through the blood of his cross;" and hath "blotted out for ever the handwriting that was against him."

As to sanctification, also, he is "complete in Christ" as to every thing necessary with relation to our heavenly Father. The Spirit of Christ makes us new creatures; we are "renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created us." This is Christ's work within us, as the other is his work without us. This is infused into the heart, as the other is reckoned and imputed to us before the bar of God. This is increased daily, and nourished by prayer and other means of grace; the other is received by faith, and remains in itself the same. This is gradual and imperfect in this dark, struggling world, but completed at the hour of death; the other is full and adequate at once, though the evidence and comforts of it vary, and the fruits of it in a holy life to be produced at the day of judgment, are constantly augmenting.

Again, as to consolation, we are "complete in Christ," and want no additions of human contrivance. The glory of his person as God-man, the ineffable depth of his love, the mystery of his humiliation, the merit of his sacrifice, the power of his high priesthood, the amplitude of his interces-

sion, the witness of his Spirit, the extent and adequacy of his inspired word, the riches of his promises, and the succours of his providence, unite to produce "a peace of God" as the ruler and umpire of the heart, which "passes all understanding," as the apostle elsewhere speaks.

And how can the hope of final victory be incomplete, when "our life is hid with Christ in God?" so that "when Christ, who is our life, shall appear, we also shall appear with him in glory;" and when, in the mean time, he "strengthens us with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience and long-suffering with joyfulness?"

Lastly, we are "complete in Christ" as to all the motives needful for a holy life and conversation. Having "received Christ Jesus the Lord, we walk in him." Being "risen with Christ," we "mortify our members which are upon the earth;" we "put off the old man with his deeds, and put on the new;" we feel and exercise "bowels of mercy, humbleness of mind," and all other holy tempers, as "the elect of God, holy and beloved." The "word of Christ dwells in us richly;" and "whatever we do in word or deed, we do all in the name of the Lord Jesus." We fulfil also our relative duties, "continue in prayer, walk in wisdom towards them that are without," have our "conversation seasoned with salt," follow the steps of Tychicus, Luke, and others, whom our apostle commends, "take heed to our ministry," if we are ministers as Archippus; and constantly read and study the Holy Scriptures, as the church of the Laodiceans was directed to do.

Such is St. Paul's method of training fallen man for a devout life; and such must be ours. Such are the principles and spirit of a Christian as rising out of the vast mystery of redemption, and inseparable from it.

I pause to ask whether we follow St. Paul in this part of his Epistle? A devotional, retired, penitent life, will degenerate into mysticism or superstition, unless nourished by the doctrines of the atonement and blood of Christ, and the

influences of his Spirit. The whole revelation of the mediation of our Lord lies at the root of the spiritual life, and is essentially necessary to it. Is this our view of Christianity? Is our piety a stream flowing from the living fountain of Christ's love to us? Is our penitence comforted, are our confessions relieved, our efforts sanctified, our hopes enlivened, by the blessed completeness which is proposed to us in Christ our Lord? Do we fly from our own weakness, guilt, and unworthiness, to his strength and merits? Are we "crucified with Christ," as our apostle speaks in another place? and do we "nevertheless live, yet not we, but Christ liveth in us; and the life which we live in the flesh, do we live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved us and gave himself for us?"

III. But let us learn, again, from our Epistle, *in what manner this doctrine of Christ, which is thus essential to the production of the internal life of grace, is to be proposed and enforced.*

Our doctrine and course of instruction must resemble those of St. Paul, if the converts are to be like his; not only must the truths themselves be of the same kind as the apostle's, but the manner of stating them, the address, the proportion, the distribution of their parts, the accompanying affections, the object in view must be like his. There must be a thorough understanding and a firm hold of "the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ," or we can never teach it. "Christ the hope of glory," must be the sum of our faith, as it was of the apostle's; "Christ our all and in all, Christ our head," our "reconciliation," our "life," our complete, adequate, and exclusive Saviour and Mediator. Then we shall preach as St. Paul did.

In the next place, we must use largely the very language of St. Paul and the other inspired writers, and incorporate it with our own doctrines, or we shall fail in imitating them. The far greater part of our instructions in public and private

should be composed of holy Scripture wisely explained and applied. Mere strings of texts, indeed, repeated without feeling or propriety, are of little or no value ; but Scripture richly wrought into our discourses and supporting all we advance, is the "incorruptible seed" of the divine life. If we shun the language of St. Paul, we shall not long retain the Gospel he proclaimed ; he must live and speak in us and by us.

Again, Christ in all his glory, all his complete work, all his offices, must be known and acknowledged to be the daily food of the soul, the motive to all duty, the source of all strength, the consolation under all afflictions. We must not put Christ on one side, as it were, as having wrought redemption, indeed, but as not necessary to be presented in every exhortation ; or imagine that great festivals or set occasions of proving his divinity or atonement may well recall him to our minds ; but that for the rest, it is enough for us to dwell on duties, and the mortification of sin, and parables, and the proverbs, psalms, and sermon on the mount. This is a fatal mistake. The cold essay on subordinate matters starves the soul. Details of morals are what Aristotle, Cicero, or Epictetus, might teach. Minute historical criticism, disquisitions on parables, mystical devotion, declamations on the brevity of life, are inefficient to the awakening and instructing of man dead in sin. Christ must be the prominent person throughout our ministry, as in the Epistle before us, or we shall totally fail. We are not to be Jewish preachers, nor followers merely of John Baptist, but preachers of the Gospel of Christ our Lord.

Once more ; all St. Paul's doctrine was intermixed with earnestness and meaning, with experience and love, with spiritual feelings and affections, with the conflict of prayer and humility of soul, and with the unaffected reliance on the operations of grace to make them successful ; so must ours. Our doctrine must lead directly to conversion of heart, and faith, and holy love. Our creeds, and articles, and summa-

ries of theology are only the rudiments of piety. All the doctrinal statements in either Testament are interwoven with practical results, are dipped in the heart, are not introduced abstractedly, but clothed with circumstances, and directed to some immediate and high practical design. All the vast and mysterious scheme of redemption is subservient to the bringing man back to spiritual feelings and duties. So the doctrine of the Holy Ghost; so the vital and all-comprehensive mystery of the Trinity of persons in the one adorable Godhead—nothing is abstract and speculative.

And the reason why God is pleased to raise up strenuous defenders of the faith from age to age, to refute the erroneous systems of idolatry and superstition which Satan invents and aids, is, that error blights the tender plants of grace. Their growth is stunted. It is a mephitic atmosphere. As divine truth imprints God's image upon us, so Satanic lies imprints that of the devil. The Lord, therefore, "when the enemy comes in like a flood, lifts up a standard against him." Every word of St. Paul's doctrine in this Epistle is imbedded in the inmost soul of the writer, and aimed direct at the heart of the converts. His tears and prayers accompany every exhortation. There is as little as possible of man and outward matters, to make room for the grandeur of Christ and the work of his Spirit in us and by us. As a "nurse cherisheth her own children, so was he gentle among them, willing to impart unto them, not the Gospel of God only, but also his own soul, because they were dear unto him."

Further, diligent study in the closet must be employed in our preparation for public duty, if we would resemble St. Paul. The address and wisdom, the fortitude and tenderness, the choice of topics and proportion of different truths which he had by inspiration, we must acquire by study of the Scriptures, meditation, prayer, a deep acquaintance with our own hearts, a consideration of all the classes of persons we have to instruct, and an imitation of the prophets of old and of our Lord in the New Testament. We must not "of-

fer to God that which costs us nothing." We must "rightly divide the word of truth." We must, as a prudent "householder, bring out of our treasury things new and old." We must let "the word of Christ dwell in us richly in all wisdom."

Further, a wise regard should be paid to the circumstances of our congregation, and the prevalence of any species of error amongst them. This was St. Paul's practice. Every verse of his epistle had a reference to the false teachers creeping in amongst the Colossians, and beguiling their souls. Thus cautions must be wisely given by us also, and worked into our ordinary doctrines, from time to time, without too much detail. And whilst we correct one class of errors, we must take care not to run into those of an opposite extreme. St. Paul, in the midst of his fervent argument, unites "order with steadfastness in the faith of Christ;" and after having pointedly condemned angel-worship and vain superstition, he returns to the main and practical characteristics of Christianity; for cautions and warnings will not of themselves feed the soul; they must be united with direct evangelical instruction.

Once more, love must be the prominent feature apparent in our ministry; "love to all the saints in Christ Jesus;" charity "which beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things;" love for the souls of those whom we address; grief if we are compelled to use harshness; freedom from all personal ends and private feelings, and irritation of temper, and an evident desire to do good in the highest sense and largest measure to the bodies and souls of those whom we address; benevolence is an universal language.

Lastly, our labours and conversation in the family and the church must support and not contradict our public and private instructions. Our discourses are not all our ministry—far from it. Public prayers and sacraments, the habitual deportment, the visits to the sick and well, the

word, spirit, charity, patience, faith, purity, meekness, of the minister, must show what we mean by Christianity. St. Paul's catalogue of his labours and toil, and his meekness and patience under them, may teach us what should be ours. Our flocks look, not only to what we say, but to what we do, and interpret the one by the other.

Allow me, therefore, to ask here, again, is this model of St. Paul's manner of inculcating the gospel that which we propose to ourselves? Are we aiming to be "wise to win souls?" Do we cast about how we may best present truth, awaken the conscience, console the contrite in spirit, alarm the infidel, detect the false professor in our flocks? Is our ministry our joy, our honour, our study, the passion of our lives? Do we aim at fulfilling our ordination vows, in the entire amplitude of their meaning and authority? Is our ministry such, that if St. Paul were to be present, he might say, That is what I intended in my Epistle to the Colossian church? Does love pervade our ministry; Christ fill the field of vision; wisdom and address control our speech; the varied circumstances of our flock occupy our waking and sleeping thoughts; the errors prevailing around us excite our caution and our fear, and dictate preventive topics of instruction? Have we, above all, the first principle of a faithful ministry in the life of God in our own souls? Are we ourselves seeking for honour, and glory, and immortality, and eternal life? An unconverted minister is not likely to be the means of converting others to a religion which he has never felt and does not understand.

IV. But we learn, further, from this epistle, *some of the reasons why erroneous doctrines concerning Christ's mediation are of such a destructive tendency, however plausibly they may be introduced.*

I need not here repeat what the preceding lectures have detailed at length of our apostle's argument throughout this epistle.

The doctrine of the original glory and meritorious cross of Christ, of his triumphant resurrection, and glorious session at the right hand of God, as our one only High Priest and Mediator, is the foundation truth of Christianity, the platform on which all mercy to man is erected, the indispensable principle of the Christian life and character.

To show, indeed, the fatal effects of tampering with this doctrine, it might be enough to say that this is the grand discovery of the love of God, the purpose which he purposed in himself before the world was, and for the manifestation of which a lost race is borne with; and that the heart-felt submission to this method of salvation is the seed of the divine life, the means of pardon, the spring of hope, the way to adoption, holiness, and joy.

Further, the whole plan of redemption, from the promise of the "seed of the woman," to the consummation of all things, has its development in every part, in Christ's mediatorial undertaking. It is through his merits and intercession that the Spirit is given; it is Christ whom this divine Comforter glorifies; it hath "pleased the Father that in him shall all fulness dwell." His purpose is to lay a foundation for the praise of the glory of his grace in Christ Jesus through eternal ages. The principalities and powers in heavenly places are to contemplate for ever in his work the manifold wisdom of God. The floodgates of love and obedience are thrown open in the soul of man by the hope of pardon which the blood of Christ has purchased. Christ dwelling in the heart by faith, strengthens him for duty and for suffering. But if this grand design of Almighty God is frustrated by our perverse and foolish inventions, salvation is annihilated,—pardon, peace, reconciliation, the Holy Ghost, the new nature, the mortification of sin, holy obedience, preparation for heaven, all, all are dissipated and destroyed.

The introduction, therefore, of an odious system of angel-mediation, prayers to dead men and women, the worship of

the Virgin, purgatory, indulgences, the sacrifice of the altar, the vicarious masses of priests, the merit of celibacy and monkish vows, the supremacy and infallibility of the Pope, the authority of the Fathers, the supercession of the Bible as the only divine rule of faith and practice, the *opus operatum* of the sacrament, works of supererogation, the merits of man, and the whole mass of Romish idolatry and superstition, go to defeat God's great purpose; they obscure the rays of the Sun of Righteousness, they are Satan's schemes of corrupting the simplicity and opposing the adequacy of Christ's mediation.

In *language* the errors may seem small at first;—"The enticing words of man's wisdom" may color them over;—but in *things* they are gigantic. They pretend to mend what God has made complete already. For that glorious perfection of Christ's person, as the only Mediator, they thrust in human and angelic mediators. For the infinite merit which is in Christ, they substitute in part man's miserable doings. For the infinite efficacy which is in Christ to renew man by his Spirit, they foist in vain superstitions and abstinences.

Here, then, we have other mediums of approach to God, other foundations of dependence, other sources of grace and holiness. Thus they rob Christ of his glory, salvation of its efficacy, and man of his motives and strength for obedience.

The entire ground on which we stand is shifted. The mediation between God and man is shifted from the all-glorious Saviour to human doings, and payments and prayers to departed saints. The rule of faith is shifted from the holy Scriptures to man's traditions. The church is shifted from the body of Christ, united to him by faith, to an external union founded on the figment of apostolical succession. Justification is shifted from Christ's only merits, to works done through grace. Sanctification is shifted from Christ raising

us by his Spirit from the death of sin, to human commandments, and the neglect of the body, which leaves us still in that death undisturbed.

All is desolation, destruction, pride, idolatry, superstition, a spirit of bondage. We no longer "hold the head;" and being cut off and severed from that, our salvation is impossible.

The spring of all this system of error, whatever we may pretend, is as bad as the effect—a wilful humility, an intrusion into things not seen, a vain inflation of the fleshly mind, will-worship, and a show of wisdom without the reality—such is the apostle's decision.

What is left of truth, moreover, is inefficacious, being disjoined from Christ, the centre of the whole. The wheels of the machine are motionless, the main-spring being gone. Religion is one dark mass, the Sun of Righteousness being eclipsed. God's gracious Spirit is withheld, his grand purpose in Christ being superseded. Superstition and infidelity brood over the surface of Christianity.

Individual penitents, no doubt, cling still to Christ the Lord, notwithstanding their education in a corrupted church. A Cranmer, a Luther, an Arnauld, a Pascal, a Nicole, a Quesnel, a Fénélon, though brought up in a false submission to man's authority, and accustomed to regard the general tenets of Popery as of divine command, still adhere to Christ's only mediation and escape, by individual feelings and habits of thought, the real import and idolatry of the doctrine of Trent. Charity delights to extend her hopes to the utmost bounds in this view. There were seven thousand in Israel, unknown to the prophet, who had not bowed their knees to Baal. But the system is not less idolatrous and destructive in its proper tendency, and as to its effect upon the great majority of its adherents.

Let us pause, then, once more, and ask ourselves whether we have been seduced in any measure by the "craftiness of men who lay in wait to deceive" on this vital topic?

Let us examine ourselves whether our loyalty to Christ, our divine Mediator, has been sapped unknown almost to ourselves. Let us dread letting go our hold of Christ and salvation. Let us follow our apostle in his doctrine of the end Christianity has in view ; of the means she employs to produce this end ; and of the kind of instruction which she delivers in the application of truth ; and thus let us never be moved away from Christ, our hope of glory, our complete and adequate Saviour and Mediator. God is a jealous God. Let us preserve a salutary dread upon our minds, a horror of the least approach to the harlot-cup of the apostate church. Let us consider well the whole mass and congeries of error and truth mixed up in it for ages with such infinite art by all the acute intellects of unnumbered votaries, bound to her by secular gain, trained to submit to her by education, filled with the spirit of partisans in her cause, and armed with the tremendous power of the inquisition and other methods of persecution. The Papacy, it has been well said, is the deepest conception and mightiest achievement of Satan ; into which he has admitted the whole canon of truth, and yet contrived that it should teach only error ; into which he has admitted the whole revelation of light, and yet contrived that it should breed only foul and pestilent darkness. It is an ample net for catching men, a delusion and bondage adapted for deceiving and enslaving the whole world. No partial error like that of the Gnostics framed out of mystic imaginations ; or that of the Arians, framed out of the proud arguments of reason ; or that of the Pelagians, openly denying the grace of God ; or that of Nestorius and Eutyches, refining on the mystery of the Trinity ; or that of the Munster Anabaptists, framed out of the licentiousness of the passions—but a stupendous system of deception and universal counterfeit of truth, which has a chamber for every natural faculty of the soul, an occupation for every energy of the natural spirit, and a space ample enough for all the intrigue and chicanery of the secular wit of man. Pagan Rome is Satan's work,

constructed with his own materials of ambition, arms, policy, and knowledge ; but Papal Rome is Satan's work, constructed with the materials of God revealed in his holy word.* And of this system the head and front, let it be ever remembered, is the idolatry of saint-mediation, the supercession of the Lord Christ in his meritorious cross and most glorious high priesthood by created beings, angels, and men.

V. One further remark may be allowed me on *the assured hope which we may entertain of the ultimate triumph of the only Mediator and Saviour in every part of the church and of the world.* The issue of the contest has never been for a moment doubtful. We may gather from the whole description of our Lord's person and work given us in this wonderful Epistle, compared with "the word of prophecy" generally in both Testaments, that the time will come when the angel-trumpet will blow ; when the Papacy will finally crumble into ruins, and "the kingdoms of the world become the kingdoms of our God and of his Christ."

For is not Christ "the image of God, the first-born of every creature?" Is he not at "the right-hand of the Father," sitting there "till his enemies be made his footstool?" Is not "all power given him in heaven and in earth?" Can he not, as "the Creator of all things, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers, and as he by whom all things consist," take to himself at any moment his great power and reign? Is he not also the "first-born from the dead?" Has he "not spoiled principalities and powers, and made a show of them openly, triumphing over them on his cross?"

Let us wait, then, with confidence his time of overthrowing and terminating the Eastern and Western apostacies—Mohammedanism and Popery ; of "binding Satan and casting him into the bottomless pit ;" of converting and restoring

* Milton.

the houses of Israel and Judah ; of “ bringing in the fulness of the Gentiles,” and of causing the “ knowledge of the Lord to cover the earth, as the waters cover the sea.”

The interest and duty of our own Protestant church, and of each individual member of it, and more especially its bishops and pastors, is quite clear. They must not, in such a conflict as this, “ halt between two opinions.” He that is not with Christ is against him. They must choose between Christ and Rome. They must reject with promptitude all the superadditions of human folly, or betray the Lord our only Mediator. They cannot have the Pope and the Bible at the same time. They cannot serve God and mammon. Let them boldly range themselves, then, on the Lord’s side, and take all the consequences. Let them dread any contact with the New Testament Babylon. Let them come out from the magic circle of popish enchantment, and keep within the sacred enclosure of their Saviour’s sole mediation and grace. Let them adhere to Christ ; the “ head over all things to his church.” Let the sublime description of our Lord’s person and glory, given us in this epistle, assure them of his certain, and perhaps speedy, victory ; for assuredly the signs of the times seem drawing towards a termination. Let them imbibe more and more the devotional spirit of this Epistle as to the end which Christianity aims at. Let them believe more firmly all the doctrines by which this spirit is awakened and nurtured. Let them follow our apostle in the order and manner and tone of his addresses in the use of these doctrines. Let them entertain a just abhorrence of all the interfering pretensions of the idolatrous church. Let the sole mediation of Christ suffice. Let the worship of angels and saints be dreaded as impious ingratitude towards Christ, as contrary to the whole tenor of holy Scripture, and as subversive of the entire scheme of redemption. And let them wait with humble assurance for the final triumph of Christ throughout the world, when the visible church shall be purified, when “ the nations and people that will not serve Christ shall

perish ;” when the New Testament “Babylon” and her “man of sin” shall be “consumed with the Spirit of Christ’s mouth, and destroyed with the brightness of his coming ;” when the Mohammedan woe shall terminate, and the eastern churches, after twelve or thirteen centuries of desolation, be revived and restored—and when the several blessed Lutheran and Protestant churches being purified, and their missions enlarged and prospered, there shall be an union amongst all the nations of the earth in Christ the only Mediator, one fold under one shepherd, one Lord and his name One.

THE END.



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